



# A TIME IN THE LIMELIGHT FOR THIS FOOL!

Translation: Cannongerbil

Aren't  
I an  
Awesome  
side  
Character!?

GIFTING  
this WONDERFUL WORLD with  
BLESS INGS!  
EXTRA



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# **Ano Orokamono ni mo Kyakkou wo!**

– Dust spinoff: A time in the limelight for this fool too! –

**- Volume 1 -  
Aren't I a great side character?**

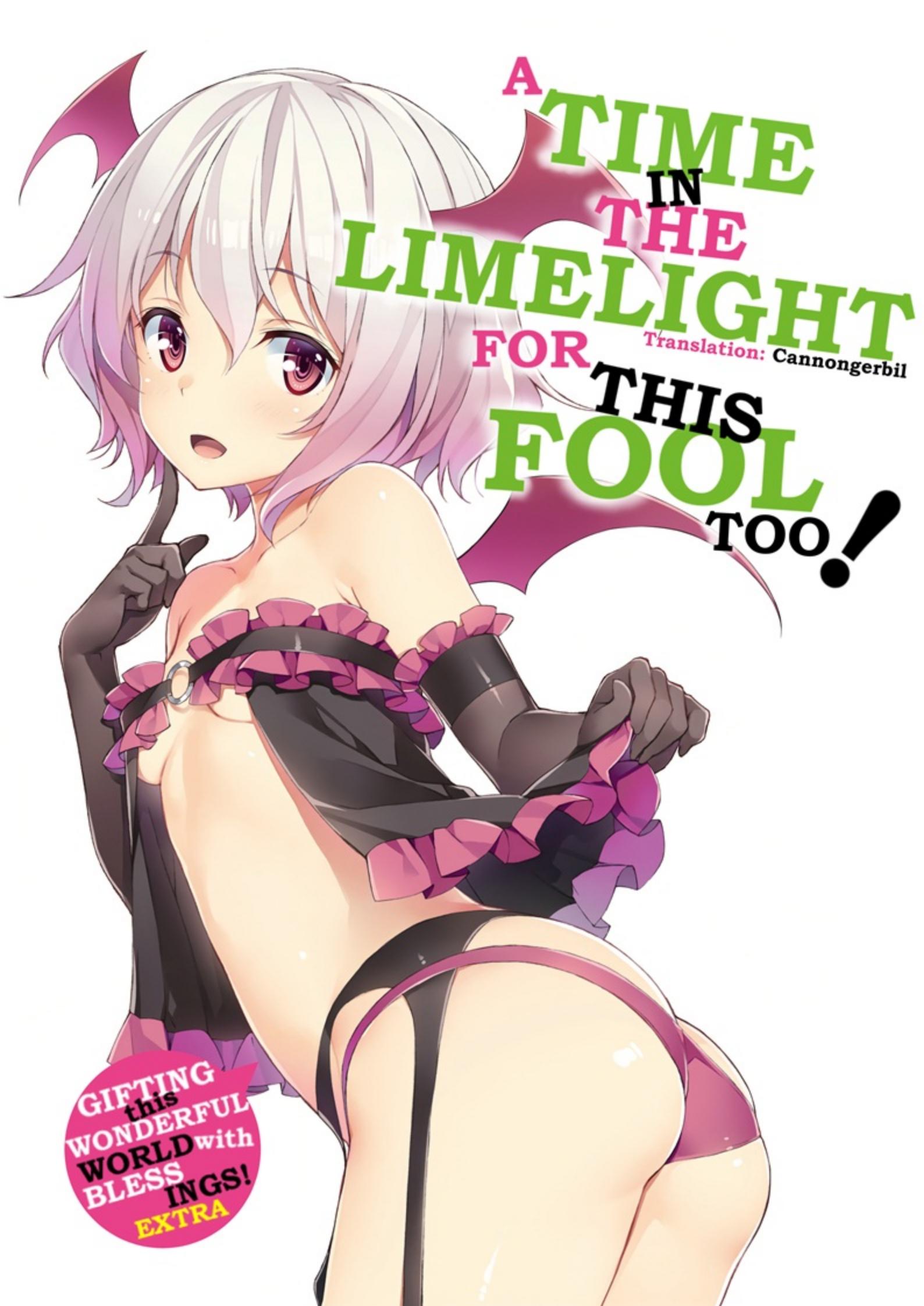
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## **- STORY -**

A spinoff of Kono Suba featuring Dust as the primary protagonist, taking place around volumes 1-4 of the main series.

“No money, no women!” The (self-proclaimed) carry of Axel, the delinquent Dust, is suffering from a chronic case of empty-wallet. Whilst the newbie adventurer Kazuma continues to steadily make a name for himself –, Dust is busy setting people up in scams, selling stolen products, ripping off noble ladies, and the like. ‘Let’s make some money today too!’ Whilst he was doing so, he was told an ominous prophecy by the great devil Vanir: “Thou hast a interesting future ahead.”



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GIFTING  
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"isn't this  
just  
lingerie!?"

!! ...W-Wait  
a  
minute,"



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# Character

LYNN

Occupation: Mage

Dust's party member.  
Seems to be regarded  
as his guardian whenever he causes problems.

DUST

Occupation: Warrior

A somewhat famous adventurer in the town of Axel. There are some weird rumours surrounding him, but no one seems to know the truth.

YUNYUN

Occupation: Archmage

Even though her skills as a mage are well spoken of, she generally works alone.

LOLI SUCCUBUS

Occupation: Salesperson

Succubus who works at the shop that provides good dreams to male adventurers. Has an unassertive personality.

AQUA  
Occupation: Archpriest

DARKNESS  
Occupation: Crusader

MEGUMIN  
Occupation: Archmage

# Prologue

“Listen up, Kazuma. You’re still pretty new as an adventurer, so no matter how many Demon King’s Generals you defeat, you mustn’t let it get to your head. You get that?”

At a corner of the tavern at the adventurer’s guild, I’m imparting the experience I’ve gained as an adventurer to a newbie adventurer named Kazuma.

Even though he’s a newbie, he and his party played a huge role in the defeat of the Dullahan that was a general of the Demon King Army. He’s a bit of a rising star.

We had our disputes in the past, but... that was but the mistakes of my youth. All that is behind us now.

“I’m not saying this because I hate you. It’s something that only a close friend would say. I’m definitely not saying this because I’m jealous of you being surrounded by a party of beautiful girls. You understand that, right?”

I’m not such a petty man. I need to emphasize that.

“Yeah, of course I understand, Dust. Though we are really more acquaintances than close friends.”

“Hey, come on, don’t be so distant. Aren’t we close enough to share a private room for a night?”

“Don’t put it that way! It’ll cause misunderstandings! That was a jail cell!”

“I don’t see what the difference is.”

We had a passionate exchange in that cell!

I think Kazuma was in there for blowing up that shitty landlord’s mansion or something back then?

“I did see it with my own eyes. The two of you were definitely sharing the same room!”

"Stop popping up at the most inconvenient of times, you useless goddess!"

The person who intruded is a beautiful girl with hair as blue and clear as water.

As far as looks go, she certainly is gorgeous. As far as looks go.

"Who's a useless goddess!? The goddess Aqua that the Axis Cult worships is me, you know!?"

"And that's the backstory she imagined for herself."

"Unfortunately"

She's a sad priest who believes herself to be a goddess just because she happens to share the same name as one.

"I'm a goddess" is something of a signature joke for her. Though I don't remember it ever clicking with anyone.

Associating yourself with the Axis Cult that's only known for causing trouble is already pretty odd in the first place, but she went the extra step and declared herself to be their goddess.

I've met with some Axis Cultists before, and they all seemed to be people who'd never listen to what anyone else is saying. To be honest, I really don't think I'd enjoy their company.

My party members have always clamoured for a priest, but they immediately start backpedaling upon learning that she's an Axis Cultist. That's how bad of a rap they have.

"Why don't you guys believe that I'm a goddess!?"

"Um, Priest-san, gods are beings that watch over the mortal world from way up above, you know? I'm sure they are busy with their work too. There's no way they would be free enough to descend to the world as an adventurer. If they did that, they'd be playing hookie."

"\*Cough cough\*"

“What’s wrong, Chris? Don’t tell me... it’s some kind of new game where you force water down your trachea?”

“She isn’t you, Darkness.”

A short-haired thief with a pitiful chest sitting nearby suddenly started choking, and Kazuma’s party member, Darkness, appeared to be worried about her. Well, appeared to be.

Sitting next to her, eating a plate of fried frog legs while observing the scene, is the crazy explosion girl. She is giving Darkness an exasperated look, but she isn’t exactly normal either.

Her name is Megumin, right?... Just what’s wrong with the Crimson Demons’ naming sense?

“A lot of unexpected things can happen to goddesses, you know? Like getting forcibly dragged along by some hikiNEET!”

“Aqua, that’s really far fetched. As if a goddess could end up being treated like an item and brought down to the world... That’s just impossible.”

Kazuma placed his hand on her shoulder and said with a gentle smile. Hearing that, Aqua burst into tears and tried to hit Kazuma, only for Darkness to hold her back.

I guess a priest will get angry if their goddess is made fun of.

The priest was being held back by her companions, and Kazuma continued to goad her.

This newbie really embodies this rowdy yet fun town of beginnings. Seriously.

As this lively scene played out, I, who haven’t eaten anything since morning, waved a waiter over and randomly ordered a few things.

Of course, it’d be Kazuma’s treat.

# Chapter 1

## Behind the scenes of that story

### Part 1

The beer tastes really bad today.

Even though I was drinking together with my party members in the adventurer's guild like usual, I couldn't help but be in a bad mood.

"Eh? There aren't any tomatoes in the salad. I like tomatoes... Hey, why do you keep frowning? You aren't that handsome in the first place, so you really look like a two bit thug if you don't smile, you know?"

The only girl in my party, Lynn, stopped stirring her salad to fix an exasperated look upon my face.

She's wearing a blue mantle, with her red hair tied into a ponytail. Her face is still somewhat childlike. Looking at Lynn, I just can't... No, let's leave that aside for now.

"Who're you calling a thug? Tsk, I was just thinking that the mood around town has been really bad since they came along, that's all."

"By they, are you referring to those newbie adventurers?"

Taylor, who's still clad in full armour despite being in the tavern, jabbed his thumb behind him.

Behind him is a weak-looking, black-haired adventurer and three women... They really rub me the wrong way.

The archer of the party, and also the person I'm on the best terms with, Keith, seems to be fairly interested as well, and turned to follow Taylor's finger while munching on a cucumber.

"Those were the guys who distinguished themselves in the fight against that Demon King's General, Beldia, right?"

"Seems like it. I was late to the battle, so I don't know the details."

I was coincidentally waylaid by some issues, so I wasn't able to be at the battle, but I've heard of their exploits.

"That Crusader took on the attacks of the Demon King's General head on without showing even a hint of anguish, and in fact had a bright smile on her face the whole time. She truly is an exemplary Crusader."

Taylor, being a Crusader as well, probably sees her as goal to strive towards. He's looking at her with a look of utmost admiration.

"And that Crimson Demon girl wielded some incredibly destructive spells. She really showed the difference between a mage and an archmage."

"The pillar of water that the blue haired Archpriest called down really was the highlight of the battle."

Keith has his gaze glued tightly to that priest's ass.

The blue haired girl was doing something with the fans she held in both hands. There's the issue that she's an Archpriest of the much reviled Axis Cult, but if you can overlook that bit, she's definitely a flawless beauty.

And there's the man looking for work while surrounded by those three. That fool who is looking for some luggage carrying quest despite having such powerful party members. Just seeing that pisses me off.

"Not to mention that they haven't even given me a single word of greeting. Me, who's in charge of the town of beginners. That really doesn't sit well with me."

"What the hell do you mean by in charge? Rather than in charge, you're the guy who causes the most problems in this town."

I ignored Taylor's retort.

Keith and Lynn also seemed to say something, but I averted my gaze.

"Bringing three pretty ladies with top tier classes along with you. And the man in that harem is the one with the weakest job. Man, I really envy the pleasant life you lead!"

I deliberately said that in a voice loud enough for him to hear.

And he looked at me with a face full of anger-

## Part 2:

YEAH! He agreed to exchange parties! That idiot!

I managed to fast talk that weakest class Kazuma guy into switching parties.

I'm a little concerned that he seemed to be smiling when we did the exchange, but that's probably just him being unwilling to admit defeat.

He probably said something he shouldn't have due to his anger, and his pride prevented him from backpedaling on those words. Otherwise, there's no way he'd agree to switch out such excellent party members.

I didn't expect him to agree to the party exchange after just a little goading.

Even if it's only temporarily, he must really be an idiot to give up such great gems.

They all have advanced classes, and on top of that are all fine looking women too. One of them is still growing and has a somewhat pitiful body, but there's no harm in ingratiating myself with her at an early age.

The promise was to switch parties only for a day, but if I show off my cool side here and impress them, I might end up permanently... No, that's a no go. I can't possibly leave Lynn alone. Perhaps I can convince them to join my party instead.

"Say, I heard talk about hunting goblins, but maybe we should go after something stronger instead? Like dragons! It'd be a piece of cake with us along."

What's this girl saying? She said something similar in the guild too. Does she really have a screw loose?

Well, she seems confident in her own abilities, at least.

If I recall, this confident blue-haired Archpriest is Aqua, right?

"That sounds great! I always wanted to try taking a dragon's fire breath head on! To have such hot flames smother and char my entire body... Ahh."

Is this Crusader insane? Advanced class or no, if you take a dragon's breath head on,

forget getting charred, you'll die right on the spot. And you *want* to take it head on? This girl...

"Say, I asked this back in the guild, but why aren't you armed or wearing any armour?"

"Like I said earlier, there's no point in me bringing weapons. And my armour was destroyed in that battle with the Demon King's General."

"...I don't really want to let it slide, but leaving aside the issue of weapons... Isn't it really bad for a frontliner to be unarmoured?"

"Don't worry. Weak attacks won't work on me at all! And if we are going up against goblins, it'd be far more convenient for me to be unarmoured."

More convenient... In what way?

Why did she suddenly tear up and start breathing heavily? It's just her getting excited before heading into battle, right?... Right?

She did survive a battle with that Demon King's General. Even without armour, she'll still probably do fine against a few goblins... Let's just leave it at that for now.

"Dragon hunting, huh? Very well! I'll shatter their tough scales with my Explosion magic!"

The little girl who dramatically flared her cloak and brought up her staff is an Archmage of the Crimson Demons.

The Crimson Demons are a clan famous for having large amounts of mana and a strange naming sense. Her name is Megumin, was it?... With such a hilarious name, there's no doubt that she's a Crimson Demon.

"N-No. I've said it before, you guys might be powerful enough to deal with them, but I don't think I'm strong enough to keep up. I'm sorry, but please be satisfied with hunting goblins today."

Plus... I really don't want to fight with dragons. If possible, I would rather avoid meeting one for the rest of my life.

"Fine, I guess it can't be helped. I wanted to bag something big to show off to Kazuma,

but I'll lower myself to match your capabilities for today. Be grateful."

"Yeah, I wanted to change the way he regarded us."

"Oh, very well. I'll leave becoming a dragon slayer for another day."

They aren't even considering the possibility of failure. Yeah, if they are this confident, they must be really powerful. No matter how you slice it, It's really a waste that they are paired up with someone with the weakest class.

"Say, why do you team up with someone who has the weakest class? With advanced classes like yours, you guys should have no shortage of parties to choose from."

"Umm, that's... I just can't leave that hikiNEET alone!"

"Y-Yes, that's it. It's definitely not because I was rejected by all the other adventurers and have no other party to turn to."

"Y-Yeah. It's not because the guys I teamed up with started crying and begging me to spare them. Most definitely not. It's just that I heard that a heinous adventurer is in the same party with two defenceless girls, so I eagerly requested to... I joined up to keep an eye on him to prevent him from doing anything to them."

"Ah, yeah, I get it. Now I understand why you would willingly team up with that piece of trash."

I just couldn't understand why they would willingly team up with a man with the weakest class like Kazuma.

So it's out of compassion and to keep an eye on him. I guess that makes sense.

"Yeah, given how powerful we are, that hikiNEET shouldn't be arrogantly commanding us like that! He should be more respectful and give me more praise!"

"Yeah! He should be treating us better!"

"Kazuma looks down on us too much. Now's the time to show him just how important we are."

Looking at them getting this worked up, I feel like I really could bring them over to my

party.

I'll have to show off for them today. Ah, right, there's something I should know in advance...

"Oh, may I know of your skills? It's better if we all know what we are capable of."

"I can use all the party and Archpriest skills. My specialty is Nature's Bounty, I suppose."

"Party... I-I see. Being able to use all the Archpriest skills is amazing!"

That means that she has the skill points to spare to learn party skills after learning all the Archpriest skills. She might be more talented than I thought.

"My name is Megumin! The strongest Archmage and wielder of Explosion magic!"

"O-Oh. I already know your name, but you can use Explosion? That's awesome!"

In other words, she's just like the Archpriest and learned Explosion after picking up a bunch of other spells. If that's the case, she must be pretty skilled too.

There's no way she would be stupid enough to skip learning other spells just to learn Explosion.

I heard that she defeated the underlings that the Demon King's General brought out in a flash, so there's no need to doubt her firepower. I suppose I could flatter her a little.

"I can't believe I'm partying up with someone who could use Explosion! You're awesome! I need to brag about this to my friends later."

"To understand the splendour of Explosion magic, you must be a pretty capable person. They probably won't get mad if we are this far away from the city, so now's a good chance. Let me show you my power!"

"Eh?"

What is she saying? If you set off an explosion in such a wide open plain, the noise will bring monsters running right over. She's joking, right?

As I let out a wry laugh, a large amount of magic gathered atop the staff in front of me.

My vision was filled with dancing sparkles. And this prickling is... Is she insane?

“He-Hey, sto-”

“EXPLOSION!”



My voice was washed away by the outpouring of magic, smoke and sound, and the strong shockwave... Uwooah!

“O-O-O-Oh! G-Get down!”

I immediately dropped down to the ground in order to protect myself from the shockwave, but the Crusader resolutely remained standing.

Behind her, the Archpriest sat down, hugging her knees as she yawned.

This is strange! Am I the only one who's scared? What are these people?

I shakily got to my feet after the shockwave passed, and noticed that a large crater has been blasted into the middle of the plain.

“Seriously? I've never seen such destructive power before...”

“What do you think of the power of my Explosion?”

When I turned towards the Archmage who was so proudly boasting of her prowess... She was lying face down on the ground.

“Hey, why are you sleeping?”

“I used up all of my mana...”

“Riiight... eh? You used up all your mana in one shot? You're kidding, right?”

A mage who uses up all of her mana with a single spell? Isn't that completely worthless!?

“Why did you fire it when there aren't any enemies present!? I don't get you at all!”

“Explosion magic is something you let loose when you're feeling excited. That's why you're an amateur.”

“Don't get so worked up. It happens all the time.”

“What do you mean by amateur? We just lost our spellcaster, you know?! Please at least get a little more worked up!”

Why are these guys so relaxed?

Ah, stop pulling on my clothes! Are you a kid? It's probably just an adventurer or a guard who's running towards us to investigate that noise.

"I think I can see a four legged black furred beast coming towards us... It feels like a fierce creature is headed right for us?"

"Black beast?"

I have a really bad feeling about this. I narrowed my eyes and focused on that figure.

A large feline creature covered in black fur, with a pair of large fangs protruding from its mouth... Hey, hold on.

"That's a Rookie Killer! C-Come on, we're running!"

It was probably drawn by the sound of the explosion. It'd be hard to fight it off with one of our party members down...

I piggybacked the mage who's completely useless after using up her mana and tried to run, but,

"Is that a Rookie Killer? I always wanted to face one! I'm borrowing your sword!"

"Hey, wait, that's my precious!"

The Crusader grabbed my sword and charged off toward the Rookie Killer. What the hell is that idiot thinking!?

Rookie Killers are monsters that herd small weak monsters like goblins or kobolds as bait to lure in adventurers that they then prey on. Normally, a party full of advanced classes like mine should be able to take one on... But seeing their actions so far, I can't help but get a bad feeling about this.

"Get him, Darkness! Sock him in the jaw!"

Don't cheer her on, you shitty priest! If you are going to do that, then at least cast some support magic or something!

“Taste my blade!”

The Crusader who fearlessly charged in found her sword slashing through empty air.

It's not that the Rookie Killer dodged the blow, she simply sliced away at empty air. She readied her sword and attacked it again and again... But all she ended up accomplishing was seriously menacing the wind.

“Hey, what the hell is...”

I asked the explosion girl who I was carrying on my back, and received a precise answer.

“Didn't she mention it earlier? Darkness can't land any of her attacks. Her defence is impenetrable, though.”

So that's why you said there's no point in bringing weapons!

A Crusader who can't hit her targets... An Archmage who unleashes her magic in a place without enemies and becomes immediately useless afterwards...

...No wait, it's too early to despair! This Archpriest is definitely a proper priest. I need to get her to do something with her support magic before that Crusader is taken out!

“Hmph, nice blows!”

Hmm? She can withstand the attacks of a Rookie Killer even though she isn't wearing armour?

Even though her clothes were torn to shreds, she herself was looking perfectly fine. In fact, she had a smile on her face, for some reason I don't understand... Or rather, I don't want to understand.

She even threw away my precious sword and is currently fighting the Rookie Killer barehanded.

“So you intend to push me down and satisfy your animalistic lust with my body! Even a beast desires to do all kinds of things to my smooth skin... kuu!”

Leaving aside how easily she stopped that attack for a moment, what smooth skin?!

The Rookie Killer had its fangs buried in the shoulder of the writhing Darkness. Is it my imagination, or did it just look afraid for a second?

...Even if it's just my imagination, why is Darkness not even showing a hint of pain after being bitten in the shoulder? Why is she smiling without a care in the world?

I get it now. These guys are all abnormal. They all have a few screws loose in their head. That's why Kazuma was so eager to accept the party exchange, almost as if he was pushing them away. I get it now!

"Drool on me more, and bite down harder! Then, rip my clothes to shreds and slowly corner me as I struggle... I can't wait! Haa!"

The Crusader let out a high pitched cry before rolling her eyes and collapsing. Just when I was worried that she was going to be finished off right there and then, the Rookie Killer released its bite on her shoulder and took a step back.

Was it scared by that inexplicable vigour and abnormal atmosphere? That Rookie Killer?

N-Never mind the reason. Now that it's retreated, here's our chance!

"Alright, let's run!"

"What are you saying? If we defeat the Rookie Killer, Kazuma will get down on his knees and treat us to two or even ten drinks! That's how it's supposed to be! Taste the fist of a goddess! God Blow!"

"Are you retarded? Why are you charging in now?"

Just as the priest's fist was about to touch it, her foot landed on a puddle of drool that the Rookie Killer made when it was biting the Crusader and slipped.

Her form destroyed, the blue-haired girl fell and slid until her head is right in front of the Rookie Killer. Seeing that, the Rookie Killer immediately chomped on her head.

"Aaah! It bit me! It's chewing on me!"

She sure is doing well even after being bitten on the head. Did he lose strength in his jaw after chewing on that tough Crusader for so long?

"Let go of me! You'll receive divine retribution for chewing on a goddess like that!  
Actually, it'll be really bad if you keep doing this... Somebody help! Kazuma-san!"

Seems like she can still last for some time, but I can't possibly just leave her be.

I placed the explosion girl I was carrying face down on the ground, and picked up her staff.

"Hey, I can't see anything like this! At least tilt my head upwards."

She screamed up at me, but, sorry, I did that on purpose.

The Crusader is unconscious, and the noisy priest is too busy thrashing around in its grip to pay attention to me.

"A staff doesn't count, right?"

I lowered my center of gravity and casually swung it around to check its balance. It's not quite the same thing as a spear, but, against a Rookie Killer, it's more than enough!

After having chased away the Rookie Killer, carrying the immobile mage on my back, with the crying priest next to me piggybacking the Crusader who had lost consciousness and was showing the white of her eyes, we somehow crawled our way back to the guild.

Who was the one who said it was a harem in the first place? If I could turn back time, I'd give that guy a full force running punch!

I'm totally worn out. My body and spirit are in tatters... This is the first time I've felt this exhausted after returning from an adventure.

Are they back yet? There's something I need to do after I get back.

"-That felt like a big adventure today!"

I heard Lynn's exhilarated voice from the other side of the door.

In contrast, such is my current state.

“Sob... Sniff...”

Two of them who couldn't move and a girl in tears.

After I open the door... I'll apologize and ask for my friends back.

I don't care if I have to prostrate myself before him, I'll do anything to get my companions back!

---

*TL note: If your memory is a little fuzzy, this is Dust's version of events from the party swap back in Volume 2, chapter 1.*

# Chapter 2

## Bestowing that magic sword upon you

### Part 1

My name is Dust.

I'm the one in charge of this town where beginners gather... or something like that.

It might seem like I'm lazing around town like usual, but I'm actually patrolling to maintain the public order of this town.

“Hey there, how are you doing?”

it's important to casually make conversation with the residents like this.

I start up conversations with them In order to build up a sense of familiarity with the residents. You could say it's part of my duties as a representative of this town.

“Tsk, It's Dust. Where's the salt for spreading? Bring the salt! I have no leftovers today! In the first place, you still haven't cleared your tab.”

The owner of the general shop started grumbling with an irate look.

“Hey, I just took those defective goods off your hands. I'm the one who should be demanding a refund for receiving broken goods. Speaking of which, I cut myself on those fragments, so I should demand medical bills too. And I suffered psychological damage as well, so you should cover those fees- Hey, don't scatter the salt at me!”

The store owner mercilessly scattered the salt he retrieved towards me.

Don't waste food, you bastard!

“*Sniff*, Crap, the salt got into my nose!”

“You penniless bastard. You probably haven't eaten a proper meal yet, right? Isn't it

great to receive your daily allotment of salt so easily? What psychological damage? Who's the one who forcibly took them even after I explicitly pointed out that they are broken?"

"Ah, I don't remember that. Do you have proof that you said such a thing, eh? I'll apologize right away if you have proof! But otherwise I have absolutely no intention of apologizing!"

The old man backed away in response to my threats.

Heh, you are ten years too early to challenge the amazing adventurer, Dust-sama.

"Now, come on, if you want me to apologize, bring me the proof! Otherwise you can wipe out my tab! I'm fine with things either way! Fuhahaha!"

My eyes started sparkling the moment I was assured of my victory.

I felt a sharp pain on my head, and hastily turned around to see a frowning Lynn staring at me.

"What are you doing!? It hurts, you know!?"

"What am I doing? What are you doing!? Can you not live without causing problems for others? Will you die without saying such boorish lines? Is causing problems for others your hobby?"

"I'm merely correcting someone who has strayed from the path of righteousness."

"Huh? You have long since strayed from the path of righteousness, and you dare to say that? An Axis Cultist saying that one shouldn't cause trouble for others would be more convincing than you. Fooling around with the other adventurers is one thing, but stop causing trouble for the citizens. Ah, you stink of alcohol. You've been drinking in the day again, haven't you?"

"Tsk, how could I not drink? It should've been a three. They must have pulled some kind of trick there."

Just thinking about it makes me angry. Today, I was supposed to win big at the gambling den with the skills I practiced, so I brought my entire fortune over.

After getting angry, I shoved them and ended up being banned from the premises. And now here I am.

“Did you bathe properly? You’re covered in dandruff. Don’t come too close to me.”

“This is salt! Salt!”

“What kind of idiot would sprinkle salt on his own head?”

I glared at the store owner, but he pretended not to notice.

...You have some guts, old man.

“Lynn, you are a real help. It’d be better still if you would bring him out on an adventure and turn him into a snack for some monsters. He’s nicely seasoned with salt right now, so I’m sure the monsters will be happy to have him too.”

“Sorry, I really want to go on an adventure, but the guild warned us that a Demon King’s General has moved into an abandoned castle nearby, so we can’t go out right now.”

“So that’s why I’ve been seeing more and more adventurers in the town as of late. It really is troublesome news.”

“As if a Demon King’s General would come to this town of newbies. Try using your brain a little. I told you that Demon King’s Generals and the like work in dismal and gloomy places. Well, if a General comes to this town, I’ll handle it somehow. Just leave it to Dust-sama!”

I pointed both thumbs at myself and smiled.

I’m fairly confident in being near the top amongst the adventurers in this town.

“Huh? How are you going to handle it? You are only good at blackmail and extortion and nothing else. Go off and get minced by some monsters before coming back.”

This bastard is mocking me. This old man really doesn’t know what I’m capable of.

“Right, then, why don’t I use that body of yours to demonstrate what I’m capable of? Savour the taste of my salt seasoned fist.”

As I menacingly slammed my fist into my hand and approached the old man, I felt another sharp pain on my head.

“Stop hitting me on the head whenever you feel like it! What are you going to do if I turn into a retard?”

“There’s no way you can get any dumber. Seriously, give it a rest already. You’ll get arrested and dragged into the cells again. I’m not going to be your guarantor anymore. Thanks to you, all I have to do is show my face these days and they’ll bring me right to the detention cells.”

“Hey, that facility has taken really good care of me. Please handle it next time too... The police, huh. Well, I spent all the rent money I had. They provide meals too, so maybe I’ll pay them a visit soon.”

The cell is dreary, but it provides shelter from the wind and rain and three square meals a day.

I’ll just go to a store somewhere and eat something without paying, then after squabbling with the store owner as usual, I’ll get a place to sleep in.

“I won’t lend you any more money. If Dust does anything strange, just call the police. They are used to him, so you don’t even need to tell them anything; they’ll just arrest him.”

“The police are used to him? You...”

The store owner’s gaze leveled up from a gaze of scorn to a gaze of pity. Or, wait, is that a level down?

The cells of the police station is like my holiday home. These guys should experience it at least once. It might be surprisingly to their liking.

“Stop doing stupid things and find a proper job. Even if you can’t go adventuring, there are still some odd jobs available. You’re pretty strong, aren’t you?”

“I don’t feel like being a porter or doing other such odd jobs. Well, if there’s a pretty girl in a suggestive outfit cheering me on while I work, I might consider it.”

I became an adventurer to do what I want, so why would I resort to doing something

so bothersome?

I'll live freely and do what I want. Yeah, that's what I decided.

"*Sigh...* I really wish you'd learn something from Mitsurugi-san."

"Mitsurugi? Who's that?"

My body reacted after hearing Lynn say a guy's name.

She even sounds like she quite respects him.

"He's one of the hero candidates who became famous recently. He's a handsome swordsman with a really powerful magic sword. He's courteous and strong, and there are a lot of people who look up to him... Don't you remember him? You got beaten up by him back when you got drunk and tried to cop a feel. You know, that guy with the 'Sword Master' advanced class."

"That man is not only courteous, but also an important customer who occasionally visits my shop... Unlike a certain someone I know."

Ah, that guy with that harem of two pretty girls. That guy with the ridiculous strength. I remember him, but I'm the type of person who pushes unpleasant things out of my mind.

"Tsk, I don't remember him at all. Those kind of saintly people are always hiding some dark things from everyone. No one could possibly be that just. And if he's handsome too, then he's definitely up to no good."

"You sound as if you've met him before, but you're just bad mouthing him because you yourself aren't popular. Pathetic."

"Who the hell isn't popular? The ladies at the bar I frequent fawn all over me whenever I have money, you know!?"

"Don't you feel empty after saying that?"

"Of course not! I'm not that mentally fragile. In the end, the most trustworthy people are men like me whose inner self and outer self are in sync. What you see is what you get."

“That doesn’t mean much when both your inner and outer self are trash.”

“It doesn’t matter when both sides are pitch black.”

Dammit, they are both completely in sync with their comeback.

I want to retort, but it doesn’t seem like the wind is blowing in my favour. I guess I’ll quietly back down for today.

“Bah, say whatever you want. Unlike the two of you, I have stuff to do.”

Leaving those parting words, I beat a swift retreat.

## Part 2

“Tsk, that sobered me all the way up. Things just never go well whenever I’m up against Lynn.”

Against anyone else, I could be more forceful in my words, but when I see that face...

“Ahh, let’s just stop thinking about such stuff. Now then, are there any pretty ladies around? It’d be great if they are overwhelmingly wealthy, starved for male contact, and willing to pamper me endlessly. That’d be the best.”

As I swaggered down the main street, I noticed two pretty ladies in my path. One of them had a spear in her hands and was dressed like a warrior, while the other had a dagger on her waist and appeared to be a thief. Both of them were very beautiful.

Are those women by themselves? Then it’d be rude if I didn’t hit on them.

“It’s my turn to sit beside him today.”

“That’s not up to you to decide.”

I thought they were friends, but it doesn’t seem like they are getting along too well.

Well, I don’t really care about that. Still, they have pretty good asses. If you wear such revealing clothes and shake your ass in front of me... My hand will slip.

“Aaah! What are you doing!?”

“This guy just touched my butt!”

Looking at their faces as they hurriedly turned around... Yeah, they’re pretty good looking alright... Hmm, I think I’ve seen them somewhere before... Bah, I can’t remember, so nevermind.

“I’m not taking a piece of your flesh or anything, so just leave it be.”

“You scum! The only one who is allowed to touch my butt is Kyouya!”

“Yeah, yeah! My butt isn’t meant for an unscrupulous drunkard!... Eh, wait, this is the

same drunkard who tried to hit on us back in the guild and got trashed by Kyouya!"

Ah, they are Mitsurugi's group. Then, Mitsurugi himself must be nearby... No, it doesn't seem like it. In that case, I should give them a little payback for what happened back then.

"Come now, you don't need to put on airs. I don't really remember what happened when I got drunk, and here you are speaking about me touching you in the past... You're trying to signal to me that you want to be groped, not just touched, aren't you? Very well, if you're willing to go that far, it's only proper for a man like me to respond in kind. I'll grope them until they can't return to their original shape anymore! Now, come, show me your ass!"

"Stay back, you thug!"

I made grabbing motions with my hands as I approached the two, and the two of them fearfully backed away. Seeing women that I dislike react this way makes me a little excited. I feel like I understand the thought patterns of villains a little better now.

"Hey, that's Dust. The thuggish adventurer."

"Oh, those poor things. Getting hit on by that thug..."

Shut up, outsiders. A small crowd has started to gather thanks to these girls' screams.

I didn't originally intend to go this far, but I can't possibly back down now. Let's play with them a little more.

"Stay back, you pervert! Kyouya! Kyouya!"

"Kyouya, save me!"

"Mwahaha. You can shout all you want, no one will be coming to save you! Do try and let me hear some good screams! Mwahaha!"

Oh my, this is getting really fun.

The two girls have fallen upon their asses and were looking at me with tear-stained faces. Just when I'm one step away from them,

“Halt! What are you doing to my companions?”

“Kyouya!”

The person who interrupted with perfect timing is an infuriatingly handsome young man. He had brown hair, was clad in an extremely expensive looking shining blue armour, and had a sword hanging in a black sheath on his waist.

He's dressed extremely fancily, as usual. The armour is pretty fine as it is, but that sword in particular seems to be extremely high quality. I recall Lynn saying something or other about that sword, but I can't be arsed to recall all the little details.

“Who are you?”

“Huh? Did a prince descend upon us? It's common sense to name yourself before asking for someone else's name. Oh, and in Axel, it's proper to offer some money to the person you are asking the name of. Don't you know that?”

“Offer money? Is it something like the tipping system that they use in other countries... It's another world, after all, so some differing customs are only to be expected.”

Oh, he's seriously considering what I just pulled out of my ass. Is he a damned straight laced naive fool?

“Kyouya, don't be fooled! There's no such custom! There's no need to seriously consider the words of this thug in the first place.”

“Yeah, I suppose. I have no name to give to such a thug... Well, that's what I wanted to say, but very well. My name is Mitsurugi Kyouya. What's yours?”

This guy honestly gave me his name. Is he just well mannered or a simple fool?

No, it's not that he's letting his guard down, it's more like he's confident in his own skills. I can see that look in his eyes.

“Listen up and listen well. My name is Dust. I'm a fairly famous adventurer in this town.”

“That isn't wrong, but it's really more infamous.”

“Seriously, is that thug Dust causing trouble again? Somebody go call the cops or his guardian Lynn!”

The onlookers are annoying. Whenever I make a fuss, the local residents are quick to gather.

“Oh, I feel like I’ve seen you somewhere before.”

“It’s that thuggish drunkard who tried to hit on us in the guild, remember!? I can’t forget that arrogant face, and with that lewd gaze, it’s definitely him! I remember it because it’s a face that’s unpopular with the ladies.”

“That face is definitely the result of a mind stuffed full of perverted thoughts! That’s the eyes of a criminal! He’s definitely a peeping tom or a molester! And he stinks too!”

“What does my face has to do with anything? And what stench? This isn’t a stench, it’s the scent of flowers! Even I will start crying if you girls keep saying that kind of stuff!”

Shooting their mouths off like that, these damn bitches.

“Oh, I remember you now. Do you want me to give you another beating?”

Saying that with such a casual smile, he really is infuriating.

Damnit, having this guy appear really complicates matters. He’s pretty skilled; I learnt that from trading blows with him. Not only is he pretty high leveled, but he has some abnormally high physical stats too.

He’d be a bit of a challenge to take on while I’m drunk. I should make a tactical retreat before the situation escalates. It’s definitely not because I can’t beat him!

“Tsk, my stomach just started hurting, so I’ll let you go for today. I’m not running away! You best remember that!”

I said such decisive words and quickly left the scene.

I’m not running away. It’s just that it’d be problematic if Lynn learns about this and stops lending me money!

## Part 3

It's been a few days since then, but that incident still weighs on me.

Recently, I feel like the other adventurers and my companions have been looking down on me. Is it time to show them my true abilities? It's all over for an adventurer the moment they are looked down upon.

And there's also that time when I got beaten to a pulp. I guess I should start with doing something to that pretty boy.

I'm doing this to reveal my true capabilities to the world, not because of any personal dislike of that pretty boy. It's most definitely not because I'm jealous of him for having two beautiful women by his side.

At most, it's just me as a senior adventurer educating my juniors, that's all.

"Still, what exactly should I do?"

I can't think of any way to make that pretty boy submit to me. It'd be great if something were to happen that will allow me to demonstrate my greatness and end with him tearfully begging me.

"Hey."

"As I am now, it'd be pretty difficult to get him to submit to me."

"Hey."

"Yeah, I'll have to use my head. Intelligent men are said to be charming, after all."

"Hey! Don't sit on the chair I have for sale! Don't just start reading the books I'm selling either!"

"Shut up. Why don't you go bring out some tea? I'm a customer, you know? If you don't have tea, some wine would be great too."

Loudly breaking my train of thought even though I'm obviously thinking about important matters in front of your shop. This is the worst attitude you can present to

your customers. You don't understand what the service industry is all about.

"Seems like there's a need for me to personally teach you how to treat your customers. First, bring out some wine and snacks and your petty cash."

"Customers are people who pay up. You're just in the way. Trash. Dust."

"Hey, don't think that you can say whatever you want just because I'm a gentle person! I'll spread bad rumours about your shop! Even though the shop owner here accrued a huge amounts of debts by gambling, all he does is drink the day away and chase skirts!"

"That's how you live your life! And if you are gentle, then I must be some kind of saint!"

"Tsk! You have the guts to say that? Bah, I don't have time to play around with an old man with too much time on his hands. I need to find a way to prove my superiority over that Kyouya pretty boy."

"Kyouya? Oh, you're referring to Mitsurugi-san. You and him aren't even comparable. It'd be like comparing a dullahan with zombies, or the Axis Cult with the Eris Church."

Every single one of you is singing praises about that pretty boy. What matters is the inside. The inside.

"Oh, yeah, speaking of Mitsurugi-san... A newbie adventurer came to sell a sword that he couldn't use the other day, and that sword looked just like the one Mitsurugi-san had. It was really heavy and had a dull blade, but I bought it since I thought it could be useful as an ornament or interior decoration..."

"A sword that can't cut anything can only be used as an ornament."

"Hmm, where did I leave it... Ah, there it is, this is the one I'm talking about."

The storekeeper is probably pretty free. He might have complained a whole bunch, but he ended up striking up a conversation with me anyway.

The sword that he brought out the back looks to be pretty heavy. It made a scraping sound against the ground as the owner dragged it out towards me.

It definitely looks like the sword that Mitsurugi had, down to the smallest detail...

Actually, isn't this the exact sword that he had?

Whether it's the form or the pressure I'm feeling from the blade, it definitely doesn't seem like it's been made to be used as a decoration. If the blade is dull, it's probably the work of some kind of magical seal or condition.

...Hmm? Come to think of it, Lynn said that Mitsurugi had a magic sword or something, right? I think I heard that there are certain types of magic swords that can only be used by a chosen few...

If it's a sword that can only be used by Mitsurugi, that means that it'd be worthless to anyone else. Yes, anyone except Mitsurugi himself. In other words... I've thought of a pretty great idea.

"Hey, old man, I'll buy that sword."

"Huh? I'll be grateful if you would take this useless sword off my hands, but you don't have the money, do you? If you have that kind of money, then pay off your tab first."

"Wait, I have a helmet I used to treasure. I don't use it anymore, so I'll sell it to you. It's worth quite a sum, you know?"

"Worth quite a sum, you say? Didn't you use that line to try and fool me into buying a bunch of trash you picked up from the garbage dump before?"

"It really is worth quite a sum this time. Give me a minute, I'll go fetch it."

There's no need to hide my face behind a helmet in this town, so there'll be no problems even if I sell it.

That helmet has poor ventilation so it gets really hot in there. It's not like I've used it recently anyway.

## Part 4

“This helmet, it looks simple at first glance, but you can clearly see the craftsmanship that went into this... It’s a pretty good item. Selling this would be enough to cover your tab and the cost of the sword but... You didn’t steal this, did you?”

After carefully examining the helmet I bought, it seems like he finally came to a conclusion.

It seems to be worth a fair amount. With this, things will be able to proceed like I planned.

“I don’t steal stuff! Anyway, that concludes our deal. I’ll be taking this sword now.”

“A-Ah, sure. Thanks for your patronage.”

Great, I’ve successfully bought this sword. As long as I have this, things will get interesting.

“Hey, hold up-!”

Who’s the one who shouted at me with a stupidly loud voice?

When I turned around, my eyes fell upon a girl with one hand on her chest and the other outstretched. She’s wearing a nun’s habit, so she looks to be a priestess. Even though she looks fairly beautiful, for some reason, she doesn’t seem to catch my interest.

Her gaze is giving me a bad feeling. Those clothes... Is she an Axis Cultist?

According to rumours, the Axis Cult is an organization that even the Demon Army gives a wide berth to. While I doubt that that’s actually the case, it just means that they are that famous for being a troublesome group.



What business does she have with me? I don't really want to get too involved with her.

"What do you want, Nee-chan? If you're hitting on me, leave it to later. Though if you're treating me to a meal, I'll happily come along."

"Why would an esteemed priestess of the Axis Cult like me ever hit on a man who reeks of poverty like you? You should be the one who should be treating me. I could gently whisper the scriptures of the Axis Cult into your ear if you do."

"I don't need that. My ears will rot."

"To be unable to understand the splendour of the Axis Cult teachings, you must truly be a miserable person."

Come to think of it, I've never properly heard the scriptures of the Axis Cult before, but it's probably nothing good. Humouring her would just be a waste of time.

"Dust is enough trouble as it is, and now a troublesome nun of the Axis Cult is here too. Maybe I should just close up shop for today..."

The old man let out a huge sigh.

Leaving me aside, if he is that wary of her, that means that this woman is bad news.

"We somehow ended up off topic, but what I want to talk about is that sword. That's the sword I've been keeping my eye on for quite some time! That's the magic sword that really capable and handsome swordsman has, right? After confirming that it is in this shop, I've been keeping watch over it day and night in the hopes that he might come here to buy it!"

"You're scary..."

What is this priestess saying all of a sudden?

She was pointing at Mitsurugi's sword that I just bought. From the way she's speaking, it seems like she's acquainted with him, but...

"Are you referring to Mitsurugi? What are you planning to do?"

"Give it to me, free of charge of course. That's something that should be in the hands

of the Axis Cult. Once I have the magic sword in my hands, I'll be able to threate... persuade him to support me, then I'll be able to live a lazy blissful life of eating and sleeping all day. I won't let this chance get away!"

She might be passionately saying that, but her eyes are clouded with desire... Ah, this is the kind of person I never want to be.

"It seems like you have some kind of plan, but demanding that I give you something I bought for free? How shameless are you?"

"As if you are in a position to say that"

The storekeeper seems to be grumbling about something, but I can't hear him.

"I did say for free, but of course I'll offer you something in return. Because it's an expensive item, could you sign here on this receipt?"

"Oh, if it's worth a lot of money, I can consider it."

If it's more valuable than the cost I paid for the magic sword, I wouldn't mind giving it to her.

The piece of paper she handed over along with a pen is- an Axis Cult recruitment form.

"Stop fooling around! I can't even wipe my ass with this."

"How rude! The recruitment letter is made out of non toxic materials."

"That's not the point..."

The storekeeper commented with a tired expression.

Did he just age a couple of decades?

"In any case, I'm not handing over this sword. If you really want it, bring me some money. Show me some gold."

"Tsk, money is the one thing I'm not good with, and you only want that?! What a greedy man. I should pray to Aqua-sama to make your breath inexplicably stink tomorrow morning."

That's a really plain yet petty curse! But is she really a priestess? I've heard the rumours, but even so, this is way too much.

"Wait for a while. I'll head to the Eris Church right now and scam some money off them!"

"I'll wait for you, so hurry up and bring me some cash."

After hearing that, the Axis priestess hurriedly left.

The troublesome woman has gone off somewhere, so let me confirm what I bought.

I tried to lift the sword up, but... It's heavy. Seems like I won't be able to swing this around like a weapon.

This really is a magic sword, alright. That means that Mitsurugi will do anything to get it back in his hands.

In. That. Case.

Even if I ask for a ridiculous price for it, he'll still happily pay up, right?

"Hehehe. This is pretty good. I'll be able to rip him off and earn a lot of money this way. Right, seeya, old man. I don't have any reason to remain here."

"Don't laugh so evilly. Hey, hold on, weren't you going to wait for her to come back with money?"

"Of course I won't. That's just to chase her away."

"You really are..."

I think I could hear the storekeeper make an exasperated noise behind me, but I ignored it.

I'll go hide it somewhere just in case, then once all the preparations are done, I'll make contact with Mitsurugi.

Just how much can I make him cough up? Now's the time to put my skills to use.

## Part 5:

After hiding the magic sword in a warehouse I secretly borrowed, I wandered around the town in search of him and ran into Lynn.

“Hmm, Dust? Did you find a job?”

“I haven’t found one, but I’m expecting a large amount of money soon.”

“You didn’t do anything strange, did you? I don’t want to have to fetch you from the police station again. I’m well-known enough that even the fresh policeman saluted me and thanked me for my hard work. It’s so embarrassing!”

“Well, you did work hard. Don’t worry, I didn’t do anything criminal. If anything, it’s a charitable deed.”

As I proudly stated such, Lynn glared at me with a scornful gaze.

It doesn’t seem like she believes me at all.

“I’m serious. I’m helping someone find something he’s looking for. He’ll be happy, and I’ll be rewarded. We both scratch each other’s backs and gain something out of it. It’s a wonderful partnership.”

“This smells fishy. This smells really fishy. It’s definitely nothing good... I got it, I’ll accompany you. You won’t mind, right? After all, you are doing nothing wrong, right?”

Tsk, she just suggested something troublesome.

I really want to shake her off somehow, but for some reason my lies never work on Lynn. If I just make something up on the spot, she probably won’t believe it.

“Oh, sure, I don’t mind. I’m not doing anything unspeakable, after all.”

Thinking about it calmly, I’m not doing anything illegal. It’s a simple trade, so it’s fine to let her tag along. There’s nothing Lynn can reproach me for.

Just as I was about to head out with Lynn, I saw a guy frantically running around the place... That’s Mitsurugi.

“Mitsurugi-san? You look really frantic. Did something happen?”

Perfect timing. He looks really busy, but I should call out to him.

“Hey, what’s gotten you into such a panic?”

“Pant... You’re, from back then... Pant... What do you want? I’m in a bit of a hurry!”

Covered in sweat after running around. Mitsurugi seems to be in a bad mood.

If he’s this panicked... did I hit the jackpot?

“Why are so worked up in the middle of the town? Did you see a beautiful girl? Oh, my, what happened to that magic sword you used to have? Are you searching for your sword right now, I wonder?”

“H-How did you know?”

Bingo. This guy’s heart is written right on his sleeve. You’re going to reveal all of your weak points to the bad guys if you are this transparent.

“Who knows? Anyway, have you found your sword yet?”

“I have not! You already know that, that’s why you called out to me, right?”

“Well, yeah. Anyway, say, if I had your magic sword, what would you do?

“Eh?”

“W-Wha! Why is it with-?”

Lynn covered her mouth in surprise, and Mitsurugi looked like his jaw was about to drop.

Mitsurugi’s eyes bulged and grabbed his head upon hearing that. Seems like it’s pretty important to him.

He seems to be the type that can’t tell a lie. I’m surprised that he managed to survive in this world for so long with such a personality.

Is it because the girls that usually hang around him are capable? Or maybe he's just that strong.

"Mitsurugi-san, hang on a moment. I have something to discuss with him. Dust, come here! Hurry up!"

"Hey, I was just about to discuss some very important matters. What are you doing now?"

Turning her back on Mitsurugi and motioning to me, she wrapped an arm around my neck and whispered,

"What's going on? Explain."

"I found the magic sword on sale in a general shop, so, being the kind hearted soul that I am, I bought it before anyone else could. Aren't I charitable?"

"If that's all you did, then, yeah, it's nothing bad, but... I'm sure that's not all you did... Dust, I'll accompany you, so let's go back to the general store. There's still a chance that you might be forgiven."

"I didn't steal it! I properly bought it. With money. Why does everyone keep assuming that I'm a thief?"

"That's obviously because of the way you behave every day."

Lynn said that while glaring at me, but I'll let it pass for now. I have very important matters to discuss, after all.

"Oh, sorry for making you wait. I came across the sword in a general store, and I bought it because I liked the look of it, but... it seems like I wasted my money. It's too heavy and gets in the way, so I was thinking of having someone melt it down and reforge it into a new sword."

"W-Wait, please! If you want money, I'll pay for it!"

Yes, he took the bait. Looks like I'll be able to wring quite a large sum from him. Now, then, how much should I ask for? I exchanged it for my helmet, but if I recall, the price tag was about 100,000 eris, was it?

In this kind of negotiations, it's natural to first quote an exorbitant price, then slowly lower it to determine what his limit is. In that case, I should open with...

"Hmm, well, I did pay a lot of money for it. At the very least, I want at least this much to part with it."

I raised up five fingers, signalling that I wanted five million eris.

"Five million!?"

"Wha-isn't that way too high?"

It's an exorbitant price indeed for a magic sword that easily fell into my hands. Now, I'll slowly lower it, and probably end up selling it for around a million eris...

"Very well, I'll pay that price."

"Still, I'm not a heartle... Whaaat!? Eh? You'll pay that price?"

"Wait! You shouldn't believe his words that easily! He's a man who spouts nothing but lies and deceit. Hold on, I'll wring the truth out of him right now."

"Whose side are you on!?"

I shouted at Lynn as she raised her staff and prepared to cast magic.

Don't get in the way of your friend's business. If I get my hands on this fortune, I'll be able to return the money I owed you too.

"It's fine. It's not like it's out of my reach."

"See, he's saying that he's fine with it, so put down your staff! Stop chanting your magic!"

"Even though it'd be great for the world if I properly roasted him..."

This girl will really start flinging magic at me. She mercilessly started flinging magic around whenever we got into a fight in the past.

"That's a deal, then. Ah, I can accept a little discount, you know? If you want, I can

throw in the wallet I always carried around with me. It's empty, though."

"N-no, it's fine. It's a magic sword I received from that person, after all. It's rude to put a price on it, but if it's just that much, it's more than... No, in fact it's a steal."

I never expected that negotiations would go off this smoothly.

"Well, that's fine... Ah, sorry, I didn't expect you to pay up so quickly, so I hid it in a warehouse outside of town. Here's the key to it and the location is written here."

I brought out the key and the map to where it's hidden, and Mitsurugi quickly snatched it out of my hands.

"H-Hey! What about my money!?"

"My apologies. Umm, would this be enough?"

He reached into his bag and brought out a pouch filled with money. Has he been walking around with this much money on hand?

Checking the contents of that pouch, it seems like there's more than 5 million eris in it.

"Wow! To fork out such a large sum of money easily, just how rich are you? Wealthy and handsome... The world really is unfair."

Comparing Mitsurugi to myself, I earnestly lamented.

"I might be saying something unnecessary, but are you sure you don't want to confirm the location of the sword before you hand over the money?"

"Are you worried for me? There's no need to. Even if it's a lie, I'll definitely get the sword back. The Magic Sword Gram is a very, very, important bond I have with the goddess."

Goddess? It must be a gift from someone that important. He did fork out five million eris for it without a second thought, after all.

I can't believe it was that easy for me to get my hands on a fortune. It must be karma for all the good things I did.

“Well, then, I must hurry.”

He ran away at full speed without waiting for my reply.

He has some ridiculous stamina. I was right not to pick a fight with him.

“So, what do you think? I peacefully made some money, didn’t I?”

I boasted to Lynn, who gave me a cold gaze in return.

“Hey, shouldn’t you be happy that a friend just earned a small fortune? I’ll return the money I owe you.”

“I don’t need it. I don’t want to be associated with a crime. You definitely aren’t up to anything good.”

“Don’t knock my business sense. Are you really sure? I was planning to return the money I owe you along with interest.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’ll consider it if you still aren’t arrested after a couple of days.”

Lynn said as she walked away with a wave.

She didn’t believe me at all, did she. Seriously, what kind of person are you if you don’t even trust your companions? Don’t come crying to me if you regret it.

## Part 6

Now then, it's nice that such a fortune fell into my lap, but what should I do with it?

Double it through gambling? I'm still barred from that place, so that's a no go. That means I need to invest it in something.

"There you are! I finally found you! Didn't you say you'll wait for me? What happened to the magic sword?"

So she found me, huh? The priestess from the Axis Cult breathlessly ran over to me.

I wanted to never see her again if I could, but I guess it's impossible in a small town like Axel.

"I sold it to Mitsurugi."

"You sold it!?"

You're overreacting too much. It was Mitsurugi's sword in the first place, so this is just natural.

"You wanted to return it to him too, right? Then what's the big deal?"

"I won't get any gratitude if I'm don't return it to him personally. And I here I thought I'd be able to eat something more filling than Tokoroten slime after all this time."

Even if you are poor, you should still eat something better.

Why are you eating Tokoroten slime of all things?

"Well, it's a little late, but did you raise enough money to buy the sword?"

"Eh? No, of course not."

...If you don't have the money, than what did you come seeking me for?

I get a little irritated after seeing her shrug her shoulders and give me an 'are you an idiot?' look.

“I don’t have money, but I thought that I can get it in exchange for allowing you to go on a date with me.”

“I don’t want it!”

“The beautiful priestess of the Axis Cult will-”

“Yeah, I heard that already.”

Interacting with her is just a waste of time. Is there a way to shake her somehow?

Hmm, if she’s so obsessed with that guy, maybe I can get her to leave by making up something or the other about him.

“Oh, yeah, I think he said something about searching for a priestess after getting his magic sword back. He said something about wanting to meet with a beautiful priestess of the Axis Cult before.”

“Why didn’t you say that earlier!? I don’t have time to play around with such a greedy and perverted looking man! And I need to hurry up and visit the marriage registry!”

I gave her a gentle wave as she took off at blinding speeds.

Fortunately, she’s so easily fooled. Even if the lie is exposed, the only one troubled will be her, so there’s no problem... Mitsurugi’s girls said something similar. Do I really look that perverted?

“Bah, there’s no need to care about what those girls say. Anyway, that’s all settled now. I’ve got the money in hand... let’s leave the money making to later. First things first, I need to get a drink.”

There should be a store that sells great booze near the gates.

Because the town of Axel is surrounded by huge walls, plenty of customer oriented shops are gathered near the gates.

I don’t really frequent that place, but I’ve heard that, apart from eateries, there are also a lot of other stores clustered around there too.

“Freshly caught cabbages going for cheap! Lettuce are pretty cheap right now too!”

Are they selling vegetables? These cabbages are the ones caught in that large scale harvest recently, right?

Oh yeah, I've heard that there's some fool who mistook lettuces for cabbages and caught a whole bunch of them, that's why lettuces are so cheap right now.

"Hmm, can you make money with this?"

If I could buy these cabbages while they are cheap and sell them at a higher price later... No, they won't keep.

Plus there was a large harvest, after all, so everyone knows the market price. It'd be different if there's a less abundant and more expensive vegetable. As I was thinking that, the price tag of a red vegetable jumping around in the cage caught my eye.

"Hey, storekeep, why is the price of that so unreasonably high?"

"Welcome. You're referring to the tomatoes? Tomatoes had a bad harvest this year. Only the farmers that were directly contracted with us were fortunate enough to avoid that fate. That really was a stroke of luck. Tomatoes are a popular item, you know? I only have a small portion of them on display."

"That means you have more?"

"Yeah, I have them stored in that warehouse over there."

Tomatoes are frequently used in restaurants, aren't they? I thought I've been seeing fewer of them in the salads recently. So this is why.

If there was a bad harvest, that means that there'd be a shortage everywhere. That means that I'll be able to make big money by selling them at the capital. The cost of goods there is higher than in Axel. Can I make big bucks by just selling a cart of them there?

I know a person who can teleport to the capital, so if I get them to help me transport them to the capital, I'll be able to save on transport costs.

"Storekeep, can I buy all the tomatoes you have, including the ones in your storehouse?"

"The cost of preserving them is pretty high, so I'd be thankful if you would buy them, but... all of them would cost quite a sum you know? Even at the lowest estimate, it'd cost about 5 million eris. You can't pay that, can you?"

Seems like he's pegged me for a pauper.

Five million huh... I can pay for it. It'll use up all of my money, but I'll be able to make it back manyfold. Indeed, heaven must be watching over me. It must be karma for my daily good deeds.

"Oh, will this be enough?"

I pulled out the bag containing 5 million eris that I just received.

After the surprised storekeeper confirmed the contents of the bag, he gave me a wide smile and started rubbing his hands together... Well, I don't dislike such a straightforward personality.

"Thank you for your patronage. As long as you have the money, I won't care where it came from. You don't need to say anything. Money is money, after all. I'll lend you the cart as a service, so return it to me later, okay?"

The storekeeper seemed to have misunderstood something, but happily gave me the tomatoes. I loaded them onto the cart and pulled it off. Now, all I need to do is speak with the guy who knows teleport- ah, what about Lynn? If she knows teleport, then I'll be able to cut down on costs even more.

"Emergency! Emergency! All adventurers, please arm yourself and gather at the front gates immediately!"

An emergency announcement echoed through the town. It's noisy.

This is the voice of Luna who works at the adventurer's guild. She sounds pretty panicky, did something happen? If we are to arm ourselves, does it mean it's related to monsters?

"Emergency! Emergency! All adventurers, please arm yourself and gather at the front gates immediately!... Especially adventurer Satou Kazuma and his party, please report there at once!"

“Satou Kazuma? Who’s that? It doesn’t ring any sort of bell.”

It’ll be troublesome if I don’t respond to an emergency summon. Still, what should I do about these tomatoes?

I don’t have time to bring it back to the warehouse, so should I leave it by the gates? No, wait, leaving something worth 5 million eris alone is too risky. It’d be too easy for it to be stolen. Just what should I do.

I couldn’t think of a good plan, so I had no choice but to drag my cart along with me, pushing my way past the crowd of people trying to escape as I headed to the gate.

Because it’s an emergency, all the citizens are fleeing away from the gate and heading deeper into the town, so the streets cleared up quickly.

Alongside the walls, the adventurers who were pushing against the flow towards the gates looked at me with a questioning gaze.

“What are you doing? Didn’t you hear the emergency announcement?... Hey, why are you dragging around a cart of tomatoes? What kind of scheme are you up to now?”

I encountered Lynn just as I neared the gates.

Taylor and Keith were there too, but they simply gave me a nod of acknowledgement before running ahead.

“I’m not scheming anything. I was just in the middle of buying something. Just what was that broadcast about?”

“I don’t know the details, but Luna sound really panicked. You should stop doing stupid stuff and hurry up. Oh, and if you have that many tomatoes, give me some later. You know I like vegetables, right?”

Saying that, Lynn disappeared beyond the other side of the gate.

The safety of the town and five million eris... I don’t even need to think which one is more important... But it’s five million. There are people who’ve dealt with the General before present here, so it’s fine even if I don’t show up, right?

“Still, I can’t just abandon Lynn and the others. Maybe I should just bring the cart all

the way out there.”

It doesn’t seem like such a bad idea. I’d feel more secure if I had it with me than worrying about it getting stolen if I left it here. Right, then, let’s keep moving on.

As I pulled the cart past the gate, the backs of the adventurers gathered before me came into sight.

Some of them gave me a questioning look. Can they really afford to look away from the battle?

I couldn’t see what’s going on because of the people blocking my view. Why are the mages all using the Create Water beginner spell?

Is that Keith standing a short distance away from the mages?

“Hey, Keith, what’s going on?”

“So you finally appeared, Dust... Why are you dragging a cart along? You can’t fight like this, can you?”

“It doesn’t matter if I can or can’t fight, I will fight.”

“Even if you say something cool, you’ll just sound like a fool if you look like that. Anyway, now’s not the time to talk about that. Several of the adventurers got taken down. It’s good that we figured out water is his weakness, but if we can’t land a decisive blow, then things will just get worse.”

Someone got taken down?!

That won’t do. I can’t let there be more casualties. Time to get serious.

“Move! Dust-sama will turn them into mincemeat!”

“Hey, idiot! At least leave your cart behind!”

As I charged forwards, the other adventurers turned around and fled behind me with frantic expressions. I could almost fall in love with myself when I’m being relied upon like this.

“You guys, fall back. Leave this to me!”

“You idiot! Hurry up and run! The tsunami is heading this way!”

“Brace yourselves! The water is about to swallow us!”

Huh? We are nowhere close to the ocean, so why would there be a tsunami? Are you guys alright...

“Hmm? What’s with this rumbling sound?... It sounds like it’s coming closer...”

I looked away from the adventurers who were running away while saying inexplicable things, and turned my gaze forward– Only to find a giant wall of water in front of me.

It’s a giant blue wall that fills my entire field of vision.

It’s an actual Tsunami!? Even though there’s no ocean!?

“Damnit, Woaaaah!”

I turned the cart around and ran back towards the town while dragging it behind me, but the rumbling grew steadily closer.

Seriously, what the hell is going on!? I don’t get it at all!

“Serious-Aaaaaaargh!”

At the same time a shockwave hit my back, my vision turned blue and I was washed away, tumbling all over the place until I couldn’t tell my left from my right.

“Blub blub blub!”

I won’t let go! I definitely will not let go of this cage!

## Part 7

“Cough. Cough. Haaaa. A-Am I still alive?”

I managed to avoid dying from an inexplicable tsunami appearing in the middle of the streets. I’m soaking wet, but I’m still alive. As long as I’m alive, I suppose I can’t complain too much.

“Still, why did a tsunami appear here? I almost drowned there. I’m going to need to find the guy who did this and charge him for medical expenses. No, wait, now’s not the time for that. The tomatoes. What happened to the tomatoes?”

Looking around, all I saw were pieces of the cart and cage scattered all around me, and the contents of the cage are... nowhere to be found.

Are the red fragments and juices stuck to my clothes and the remnants of the cage... are they... the tomatoes?

“Hey, you’re kidding me. This is a joke, right... Come on, my five million! My five million eris! Five Miilllioon!”

“Hey, stop making a fuss in the middle of town. Crap, it’s Dust.”

The person who called out to me as I was on the verge of despair is the owner of the general store.

At times like this, it should be a beautiful girl who comes to comfort me! Why does it have to be this old man?

“*Sigh.*”

“Wow, that’s a really big sigh. The walls are broken and the town is dripping with water. Just what happened?”

“A tsunami happened. A tsunami. It washed away all of my wealth... Ah, my tomatoes! Tomatoes!”

“Don’t cling on to me! Don’t scream inexplicable things while crying on me, and stop wiping your face on my clothes! If it’s tomatoes you want, there’s a few of them stuck

in the gaps of those wooden boards.”

I turned my eyes towards where the old man was pointing, and saw a single undamaged tomato trapped in the gap formed by several wooden debris.

“Oooh! Tomato!”

I quickly shot forward and grabbed it, gently holding it with both hands and raising it to the heavens.

“There’s no need to cry like that. Come to think of it, Tomatoes had a bad harvest this year. Even the only store that seemed to sell tomatoes was sold out. There might only be one, but it might be worth quite a fair bit. What about it, want to sell it to me?”

Yeah, in the worst case scenario, this might be the only tomato left in this town.

In that case, I might be able to recoup some of my funds.

I just have to place my hopes in this one tomato.

“Why does Dust look like he died?”

I heard one of my companions’ voices as I was having a meal at our usual spot. Was that Taylor just now?

I couldn’t see my companions because I was laying flat on the table.

“Who knows. He’s been like this for awhile.”

“It’s probably because you didn’t receive any rewards for taking down the General due to arriving late to the battle, right?”

I couldn’t care less about that. I searched around for some time afterwards, but the only tomato I found was that single one. It’s currently in a bag hanging on my waist.

If what the storekeep said was true, then this tomato might have some value as a rare item. I should find somewhere to sell it as such. Who knows, if things turn out well, it might even lead into my next money making scheme.

“Ah, there’s no tomatoes in the salad again. I think it’s almost two weeks since I last

tasted a tomato. Aaah, I want to eat tomatoes.”

Lynn doesn’t know about the huge loss I suffered with the tomatoes. That’s probably why she’s trying to signal to me to give her one.

This tomato is an important piece to recoup even a little bit of my funds. It’s not something I can just freely give away.

But seeing Lynn looking at me... I let out a huge sigh.

“...Lynn, here’s a tomato.”

“Eh, really? Thank you. So you do have a good side after all.”

After wiping the tomato with a handkerchief, Lynn happily bit into it.

I dumbly gazed upon her smiling face.



A five million eris smile, huh. Well, I guess this isn't too bad.

# Chapter 3

## The struggles of that Hero

### Part 1

“That adventure was really awesome, wasn’t it? I didn’t expect Kazuma to be that amazing.”

I was drinking with my companions at our usual spot in the guild, and they’ve been talking about nothing but that.

Seeing Lynn sing Kazuma’s praises all bright eyed and bushy tailed irritates me a little.

“He was really quick-witted, wasn’t he? Just thinking back to it gives me chills.”

“To think that I looked down on him for being an Adventurer. He really showed us the breadth of his skills. I can’t believe Enemy Detection, Lurk, and Basic Magic are that useful when put together.”

Even Keith and Taylor are singing his praises.

I admit that Kazuma has his own problems. I’ve personally experienced just how troublesome those three beautiful girls next to him are, after all.

The one who manages them is Kazuma. There’s definitely no mistaking that.

Even so, leaving me aside to talk so animatedly about Kazuma rubs me the wrong way.

“The way he used Basic Magic really surprised me. I think I should be like Kazuma and learn Basic Magic as well. It should come in handy. Unlike some people who end up causing no end of problems despite being pretty strong, it’d be better to have someone like Kazuma in the party.”

Does Lynn admire Kazuma as a mage? What’s the point of learning Basic Magic when you already know Intermediate Magic?

“Having Kazuma around would definitely make things easier. Unlike someone who only appears in the fight against the Demon King’s General at the very last moment.”

Keith gave me a meaningful glance while fiddling with his bow.

I couldn’t help it, it was completely out of my control.

“I wonder if we can ask for another swap.”

Even Taylor is treating me like an unwanted child.

“What are you guys saying... Don’t look at me with such scorn. H-Hey, those weren’t jokes, you guys sounded pretty serious there. I can do it if the situation calls for it, you know!? It’s just that there hasn’t been a chance to demonstrate my true skills yet!”

“The chance... Come to think of it, why didn’t you show up for the Dullahan fight? And you looked really depressed after it too.”

“Don’t make me remember that... I’ll get depressed again.”

I lost 5 million in an instant. After that, when I tried to get a refund from that storekeeper, he called the police on me, and I even had to pay the price of the broken cart... Just remembering that makes me fume!

“Nevermind that, when are we going on our next quest? I don’t have money, so I wouldn’t mind heading out today.”

“Ah, I’ll be passing on such things for a while. Until winter is over, at the very least.”

“Yeah, all the strong monsters become active in winter. With the money we got from taking down the Demon King’s General, we’ll be fine even if we don’t take any quests this season.”

“Yeah. With that much money, I might just visit that place every day.”

“You idiot!”

“That place?”

Because Keith let his mouth slip, Lynn looked over with suspicious eyes.

That's a secret place that we recently learned about that can never be made known to women. Taylor is a crusader who's very inflexible in certain areas, so we kept it a secret from him too.

I'm obsessed with earning money because I want to visit that place.

"Nevermind that, do any of you guys have any intentions of going on a quest?"

"Nope."

Dammit, they refused immediately.

Even if I were to try and team up with someone else, all the adventurers here received the reward money for taking down the General. The only one who's poor like me and interested in working is...

"Oh, hey there Kazuma. Are you heading out on a job?"

Reacting to Taylor's words, I looked up to see Kazuma and his party.

I used to be jealous of the three beauties that surrounded him, but after going through all that, all I feel for him is sympathy.

"Yeah. Thanks to a certain priest, I'm buried in debts."

"Are you saying I was in the wrong?! He was only defeated because of me, so you should be appreciating me more! Shower me with praise! Bring me some drinks and fried frog legs as thanks!"

"Shut up! Whose fault do you think it is that I'm struggling so hard right now?"

"You can scold me too, Kazuma. If the stress gets to you, I wouldn't mind taking a severe tongue lashing or two."

"I don't need that kind of stress relief!"

"Well, I'll be happy as long as I can set off my explosion magic, so I'm fine with going on adventures."

"I'm begging you, please learn some other spells..."

“I refuse.”

He sure has his own troubles... Even though he's pretty much the only one who's having money issues like me, he's probably too busy with his own issues to let us adventure together.

Plus, if I worked together with him and earned some money, it wouldn't change the way my companions regard me at all.

“Then I'll be seeing you.”

I didn't move to stop Kazuma, and simply watched as he left.

Now, then, what should I do? My friends won't be helping, and it'd probably be useless to ask the other adventurers. Then, all that's left is to search for a quest that I'll be able to do on my own.

“Ah, finding work by myself, huh. Do I really have no choice but to go alone? It'd be nice if some friends of mine are kind enough to help me out.”

I got up and pretended to stretch while giving my companions some meaningful looks, but all three of them refused to make eye contact with me.

“Right, shall we head back to the inn?”

“Don't do anything stupid and earn some money properly, alright?”

“Sorry, you'll have to enjoy this by yourself.”

Not a single one of them offered to help me. How cold can you guys be? I definitely won't treat you guys if I make it big.

“*Sigh*, let me go check what requests are up.”

It'd be great if there's a request that lets me earn money by sleeping and eating.

I went up to the notice board to check what was posted up there, but it seems like there are only harsh quests in the winter.

It's all crazy stuff like hunting down a pack of one strike bears. Attempting those kinds

of quests on my own might as well be suicide.

"Maybe there aren't any good quests because the fee is high... Hmm? Is this an Orc extermination quest?"

Orcs are a race of pig faced demi-humans. If I recall correctly, the males were driven to extinction and now only female orcs exist. They are a scary race that will forcibly mate with males of other species that they capture until they manage to conceive a child.

I would gladly pay money for that kind of service if they were a race of beautiful girls, but they are a race of pig-faced women.

Normally, I wouldn't want anything to do with them, but the reward they are offering is surprisingly good. It's not like I can take on the other quests anyway, so I should at least hear the details.

I took down the request and brought it to ridiculously large breasted guild lady.

"Luna, can you tell me the details of this request? Also, can you let me fondle your breasts when I'm depressed?"

"Oh, Dust-san. How rare to see you accepting a quest. I thought you didn't normally work in winter. Do you want me to call the cops?"

As expected of someone who deals with rowdy adventurers every day. It's pretty impressive how she can say something so merciless without her smile even faltering.

"It's just a little joke. I have a few expenses. I really don't want to do this, but I do need to work."

"I see, you arrived too late to participate in the General's subjugation, so you didn't receive any rewards. Err, that request is about the orc subjugation, right? It seems like orcs have been spotted close to a village nearby, and the village requested for them to be subjugated. The men of the village are too afraid to head out, so they are having some labour shortages."

If you get caught by a female orc, you'll be milked until you die. It's an iron-clad rule for male adventurers to immediately run away if they encounter even a single orc.

Because they desire to mate with strong people in order to have strong offspring, it's hard to scare them off with a show of strength.

"How many of them are there?"

"According to reports, there seem to be around ten of them."

I might be able to handle one or two, but ten is way too many. No matter what I do, it's impossible for me to handle that number alone. Plus, the consequences of failure are way too harsh.

"I think it's best if I don't accept this."

"That's a pity. There's a secret spring known as the Spring of Beauty in that village. Maybe it's due to that, but the village is full of beautiful girls. I wanted to make use of that spring too, but I just couldn't take time off work, and it's not like I could make use of it under such circumstances... Oh, yeah, it's not exactly an additional reward, but they left a message to be relayed any adventurers willing to accept the quest. It seems like they are willing to host a welcoming party for them if the situation were to be resolved quickly."

"Give me more details."

As I was considering that request after hearing that story, I felt a couple of quick tugs on the sleeve of my shirt.

"Huh? Who are you?"

I turned around to find a small girl looking at me with upturned eyes.

"So, you finally resorted to kidnapping... Even though it pains me to put a price on the head of an adventurer, I must follow the guild's procedures..."

"What are you talking about? I don't know this little brat! Let go of me."

"You look handsome, uncle. I'm not a little brat, I'm a young lady. You said orc subjugation earlier. Was that about my village?"

What's with this brat? Is she from that village?

She might have come here with her parents to put up the request.

"Oh, isn't she the daughter of the client?"

Seems like Luna recognizes her.

Seems like I had the right idea. Guess my intuition is still pretty accurate.

"I'm not an uncle, I'm a handsome onii-chan. If it's about the village that's troubled because a group of orcs moved close by, then that's exactly it. Are you from the village, brat?"

"Yeah, uncle. I'm not a brat, I'm a young lady."

"You are a brat, so stop being so persistent. Anyway, what about it?"

"You see, my father was attacked by the orcs. He managed to escape, but he's locked himself in his room and refuses to come out. He keeps saying stuff like 'I'm a regular person, stop!'"

I-I see. He went through a scary experience, huh. As a man, I sympathise with your dad.

He's fortunate to have escaped, but I've heard that going through an experience like that is extremely traumatic.

"Mom's been saying 'Get a hold of yourself! You're a man, aren't you!? This is why we are poor! The guys at the bar hit on me the other day, you know!?' and other stuff to encourage him, but he still refuses to come out."

"I really sympathize with your dad... so, anyway, what about it?"

"You are going to subjugate the orcs, right, uncle? Then can you bring back my birthday present that my dad dropped when running away?"

"Hey, what do you think I am? I'm an adventurer. Defeating orcs is my job."

"Then, please handle it, handsome onii-chan."

Without hearing my reply, the girl ran back to someone who seemed to be her mother.

Children are so self-centered... well, I shouldn't care too much about a little brat.

## Part 2

After accepting the quest, I moved to a place where I could calmly think about what I should do next.

I feel like I got tricked by Luna a little, but either way I still needed to accept the request. I can't make use of that shop without money!

The place that Keith let slip was that succubus shop. The Succubus have a mutually beneficial relationship with the town of Axel. They allow male adventurers to fulfill their erotic desires by giving them sweet dreams, and in turn take only a small portion of vitality and a little bit of money.

We'll feel refreshed, and the succubi will be able to obtain the vitality they need to live. It's a mutually beneficial relationship. Pretty well thought out, isn't it? That said, it would be problematic if it becomes known that we have dealings with devils, so the existence of the shop is a closely guarded secret known only to male adventurers.

Since it's only a dream, any kind of erotic situation is allowed. I've been visiting that place every day since I learned of its existence, but right now I don't even have that little bit of money.

"Female Orcs, huh. I don't really want to fight them, but I don't have much of a choice. I wonder if there's a way to deal with them easily..."

"Hey. Heeey!"

"Come on, I'm seriously thinking about something here, so couldn't you be more considerate and bring out some alcohol or something?"

"Stop joking. Why do you have to come sit in my shop every day? This isn't your house, you know? Ahh, stop imprinting yourself on the things I'm planning to sell. It's because you are here that I have no business."

I'm just resting on a chair in the general store that nobody wants to buy. What a petty fellow he must be to get so worked up over that.

If you get angry over such a trifling matter, those few hairs left on your balding head is going to fall off.

"You don't have any customers in the first place. I've yet to see any customers other than myself."

"The other customers are afraid to visit because you are here. The reputation of my shop is getting worse and worse."

"Hey, don't blame your lack of business sense on someone else. If you want me to hurry up and leave, pay me a fee, or give me a good idea to take down Orcs."

I doubt that the storekeeper of a general goods store will be able to give me any good ideas, but I'm completely stuck. Hearing what others have to say might lead to something.

"Pay you a fee... you really are a complete thug. Still, what's that about taking down Orcs?"

"I accepted a quest to subjugate orcs. I'm wondering if there's a way to easily beat all of them."

"Just fight them up front and beat them normally... You shouldn't have accepted the quest if you didn't want to do that. If you didn't, Mitsurugi-san might have ended up accepting it. The client would be cheering for joy if that happened."

Mitsurugi again? I feel like I've been hearing about nothing but talk of Kazuma and Mitsurugi lately.

"Mitsurugi, huh. Come to think of it, he's at fault for making me lose such a large fortune. I got blinded after receiving such a large sum at once, that's why I ended up wasting it all."

He probably wouldn't have any problems taking down a horde of Orcs. The Orcs are also looking for strong mates to breed with, so it's the perfect fit.

Hmm... Could I use him to fight the Orcs? He seems like the type of person who'd be easily fooled... If he ends up doing well, wouldn't I be able to share a portion of the glory?

"Hey, what do you mean by fortune?"

"That's my problem. Anyway, I thought of an extremely wonderful idea, so thanks."

“Hearing you thank me just makes me feel uneasy...”

Now then, how do I get Mitsurugi to subjugate the orcs for me... According to what I've heard, he has a strong sense of justice and is kind to women, right? If I work on those two points, I might be able to get him dancing on the palm of my hand.

Sense of justice and women, huh. In that case, I maybe I should call her for help.

## Part 3

“...And that’s the story.”

“Just what exactly do you mean, Dust-san?”

After visiting the succubus shop that I often frequent and telling the story to the petite loli succubus that I’m acquainted with, that was her reaction.

This shop appears to be a normal cafe at first glance, but it’s in fact the best shop in the world that can grant the dreams of men.

This is a paradise as usual. Wearing only the barest bit of cloth to cover their important bits, the workers of the store go about their duties while boldly showing off their bodies.

Just looking at their tits and asses constantly jiggling as they walk makes me think that it’s worth coming out here.

“Like I said, you pretend to be a village girl and tearfully beg that Mitsurugi bastard for aid. Say ‘The men in the village have been taken by Orcs. Please save them.’ or something like that. I’ll think of the lines myself, so please help me.”

“I’m not asking about what I should do, but why should I do such a thing.”

Doesn’t seem like she’s too interested. But, that’s within my expectations. I didn’t expect her jump to accept my request right from the start.

Collecting information beforehand is only natural for adventurers. I’ve already done my homework on you.

“Hey, you feel ashamed over what happened with Kazuma, right? News of your failure has spread, so the number of people requesting your services has lessened, hasn’t it? It would benefit you if you were to help me on this job. I wouldn’t mind exclusively requesting for you in the future. If you want, I can also introduce you to people who lean towards lolis.”

“Gurk, how did you...”

Her face started wavering. I knew about that Kazuma incident, but it seems like everything else I haphazardly guessed at was on the mark too.

Well, I heard about the incident from Kazuma over a couple of drinks, but the one who ended up drunkenly spreading it to everyone was me.

"And Mitsurugi is a strait-laced person who isn't troubled by a lack of women, so he wouldn't visit here. There wouldn't be a problem in deceiving someone who isn't a customer. I'm quite well known amongst the adventurers, so I can put in a good word or two about you. It doesn't sound like too bad a deal, does it? Learning how to trick men is a key component in crafting lewd dreams too, so, what do you think? Doesn't it sound like a good chance to hone your talents and gain a step up over the other succubi?"

"That does sound appealing... a little..."

"If you leave it to me, you'll definitely make it to being the number 1 succubus in this shop. I'm sure your co-workers and senpai will be singing high praises of you. Try imagining that wonderful future."

"Number 1... I don't have to be too ashamed to meet anyone's eyes anymore..."

The loli succubus stared off into the distance with a dreamy expression, probably entranced in her imagination.

Right, then, just a little more...

"Yeah, I can definitely sense a great potential from you. With me as your producer, I can definitely take you to the top of the succubus stage! Just looking at you would leave them hopelessly entranced by your charm, the ultimate succubus!"

"Can I really?"

"Yes, you can! I can make you shine!"

Seems like she's been affected by my passionate speech.

I've heard that succubi rank themselves based on how well they can charm men. It might be just a rumour, but every kind of community has their own hierarchy.

I feel like it would take just a little push to have her jump onto my plan.

“Go ahead and help him.”

The one who entered our conversation was the succubus who seemed to be the manager of the store.

Unlike the loli succubus, she has a wonderful body that almost makes me want to bury my face in her bosom. She's as sexy as always.

Yeah, succubi need to have that kind of body. You just can't get excited over a petite, flat as a board body like the one loli succubus has.

“Can I?”

“Yeah, Dust-sama is one of our important customers. Please give him a hand.”

I didn't expect her to help. As expected of the manager, she understands how to do business. I'll have to visit this place more often in the future.

“I understand. I'll lend you my aid, Dust-san. But don't ask me to fight or anything, okay? We might be devils, but succubi don't have any combat ability.”

“You're a great help! Don't worry, I won't let anything lay a finger on you. Now then, shall we discuss the plans?”

I need to properly hash out the details of the scenario we are using to trick Mitsurugi. He doesn't seem like he'd be too difficult to trick, but it's best to be as prepared as possible.

## Part 4

While hiding next to the mountain trail, we kept an eye on our surroundings while going over the plan.

“Have you memorized your lines?”

“Perfectly! Thanks to everyone’s help, there wouldn’t be any problems with the acting either!”

She must be quite confident in herself to get all worked up like that.

Instead of the revealing costume that she normally wears, she’s currently wearing the clothes of a simple villager. No one should be able to tell that she’s a succubus like this.

“But, will Mitsurugi-san really pass by here?”

“Definitely. He seems to be infatuated with the blue haired priestess that usually hangs around Kazuma, so I asked a few friends of mine to spread some rumours that she ran into some kind of trouble around this mountain.”

“Er, the priest that usually hangs around with Kazuma? Ah, no, I’ll be purified...”

The loli succubus hugged her shoulders tightly and started trembling.

Did she suffer some kind of horrible trauma at the hands of that priest back when she failed in handling Kazuma’s request?

Priests are quite belligerent, so it’s certainly possible. Priests of the Axis Cult and the Eris Church in particular are known to be strongly opposed to devils.

“She’s not actually here, so calm down. Everything is counting on your acting, so please, don’t mess up.”

“Leave it to me! I won’t fail again! I definitely won’t fail a second time! I’m saying goodbye to the days where I have to be comforted and pitied by everyone!”

She seems strangely enthusiastic. Could it be that ‘failure’ is a taboo word for her?

Come to think of it, she did have a really strong reaction when I was talking about Kazuma earlier.

“Y-Yeah, I’m counting on you.”

In order to calm her nerves down a little, I gently patted her on the head.

The surprised loli succubus raised her head and looked up at me with slightly damp eyes. Hey, you didn’t fall for me just because I demonstrated a little bit of kindness, did you?

“Dust-san... Thinking that girls enjoy getting patted on the head is just the fantasy of virgins, you know?”

“Oh, shut up! If you are fine, then go prepare.”

She might look like a child, but she’s still a succubus. She’s not so simple when it comes to matters of love.

Well, I don’t really feel anything towards a childlike girl without a shred of sensuality in her body, so it doesn’t really matter.

“It’s rude to sigh after staring at a person’s body like that, you know? Did you fall for my charms?”

Not at all. At least, that was what I wanted to say, but managed to swallow those words at the last moment.

“Sorry, sorry. Oh, quiet down, I can hear footsteps.”

Hiding behind a large tree, I took out a small mirror to confirm the source of the footsteps on the mountain path.

Blue armour and a sword with a black sheath. Yeah, it’s Mitsurugi alright. He must have ran here. Frantically looking around as he moved along the path, he definitely looks like a suspicious person.

Doesn’t seem like his girls are with him. That’s convenient.

“Let’s make a slight change to the lines. Right here, you say...”

“Dust-san, you really have a bad personality. Are you sure you aren’t a devil?”

“Hey, don’t say such rude things. I’m just true to my desires. Anyway, it’s about time for you to shine. Go.”

“Okay, here I go!”

After giving me a quick salute, the loli succubus ran out onto the road.

The leaves that are stuck to her hair and body are in good condition. After frantically running through the woods, she chanced upon Mitsurugi; at least, that’s the scenario I set up.

Right now, everything is proceeding according to plan. As can be expected of a devil who can freely control a human’s dreams, she has some amazing acting ability. Way to go.

“P-Please help me!”

“W-What’s wrong?!”

Mitsurugi caught the loli succubus who seemed like she could collapse at any moment.

Yes, now look at him with teary, upturned eyes! Oh, she even added the bit where she shakily reached out towards him... She seems like she’s really into it.

Her skirt is also rolled up just enough to expose her thighs. It’s quite impressive if she did that on purpose, but that’s just a coincidence, right?

“Th-the orcs in the village! They took all the men away! Please, save my people!”



What a convincing act. It seems like succubi also make for good actors.

"That's... I'd really want to help you, but I'm in the middle of searching for Aqua-sama. I can't possibly abandon her."

"Aqua-sama? Are you referring to a beautiful priest with long blue hair?"

"Yes, exactly! Do you know her?"

That's a good reaction. Yeah, it was a good idea to ask her to add this line to the script. He'll definitely be hooked like this.

"Yes, after learning that our village was attacked, she immediately ran off to save them"

"As expected of her. She's a prudent and beautiful woman alright. I was worried that she might receive some bad influence by staying by that man's side, but..."

No, no, she's always been like that. If anything, Kazuma is the one taking care of her. It seems like he respects her a lot, but to call her prudent... Were you dreaming or something?

Mitsurugi's actions seemed to be ripped straight out of some kind of play. It's almost like I'm watching a show at the theatre.

"So, where's Aqua-sama!?"

"R-right here, the villagers wrote down the location of the orcs here after scouting out their nest."

She took out a piece of paper from her pocket and handed it over to Mitsurugi. Of course, that map was made by me. I scouted out where the Orcs are in advance.

"I got it. Please rest assured. I'll rescue both the villagers and Aqua-sama."

He looks really dignified after boldly saying a line like that. That's why handsome guys are...

He gently lowered Loli succubus to the ground, flashed her a charming smile, and ran off.

After confirming that Mitsurugi has vanished from my sight, I stepped out to meet with Loli succubus.

“Thank you, you did really well.”

“What do you think? I didn’t fail this time!”

“It was perfect. You could fool just about anyone with that performance.”

“Come on, you’re just exaggerating. Hehehe.”

Seems like she isn’t used to being praised. Her cheeks flushed red and she started shyly fidgeting from just a little complement. She really is simple.

Praising Loli succubus is very effective. I’ll need to make a note of this.

“Right, let’s go see how Mitsurugi does. It’d be best if he were to take all of them out, but it’d also be fine if he were to reduce their numbers before getting taken out. I’ll attack the orcs from behind when they are all focused on Mitsurugi.”

“I knew it, Dust-san really is a devil...”

“I’m not!”

If Mitsurugi really does get captured, I’ll save him before anything bad happens to him. I’m not that heartless. Though I wouldn’t mind if he ends up with a trauma of women after that incident.

Ignoring Loli succubus, who was keeping up with me while looking at me with a suspicious gaze, I continued running towards my destination.

## Part 5

As we neared the spot where the Orcs were, I slowed down my pace and moved to a hill with a good view of the area.

We crawled to the summit of the hill and stealthily poked our heads out to observe the scene below.

Mitsurugi is standing in the middle of the group of defeated Orcs. Did he defeat them all by himself? He seems to be breathing heavily, but he doesn't have a single scratch on him.

Yeah, he's strong alright.

"Aqua-sama! Where are you, Aqua-sama!?"

He shouted that while checking inside the tent that was set up there.

If I leave it as it is, he might end up visiting the village to ask questions. If that happens, all my schemes would be unraveled.

"Can I ask you to handle the rest?"

"Ah, just tell him that the villagers have been saved and Aqua-sama left, right?"

"Yeah, that'll be fine."

Spreading her wings from her back, she flew down to the path, just out of Mitsurugi's sight, before running towards him. I couldn't hear their words from here, but judging from his gestures and body language, it seems like he gets the gist.

Right, that takes care of things. Now all I have to do is collect proof of their extermination and search their nest for anything valuable.

After Mitsurugi left the place, I moved down to the camp and searched the corpses for anything valuable together with Loli succubus. After some time, I determined that we've gotten everything of worth and stretched my back.

"You sure put your all into searching. Orcs and the like don't usually use any valuable

equipment. Did you find anything good?"

"...Not at all. I thought that there'd be at least a little bit of gold in there, but there was nothing. Well, having Mitsurugi take them on sure made things easier for me."

"That Mitsurugi-san person was really obsessed with Aqua-sama. It's a little frightening."

"Well, he must be a little knocked in the head to hold someone like her in such high regard."

"-Why are you here?"

This familiar voice that suddenly shouted from behind me is...

I slowly turned around to see Mitsurugi glaring daggers at us with his arm outstretched.

"O-Oh, what a coincidence."

"Is that so? I thought that it'd be too dangerous for a little girl to make her way back to the village on her own, so I doubled back. Okay, sure, maybe it's just coincidence that we happened to meet in the same place where a bunch of Orcs were just killed. But why are you and that village girl so familiar with each other? It's as if you knew each other."

Crap, he was watching us. Depending on how much he heard, I'm going to need to change my answer.

"I-I do not know Dust-san at all! We just met and haven't even exchanged a single word yet!"

"You idiot! Are you an airhead?"

She committed a fatal mistake in her panic.

"Oh, even though the two of you were chatting so animatedly with each other? And if you haven't exchanged a single word with him, how do you know his name?"

Don't plead for help with those teary eyes of yours! You break way too easily under pressure!

What should I do to get out of this? This isn't the first time I've fallen into a bad situation. Come on, there has to be a way!

"Huh, what have I been doing... Wh-Where is this place? You are that Succubus! I-I remember now! I've been mesmerized by this devil! She's the mastermind behind everything!"

I offered a scapegoat to Mitsurugi.

"Wait, what? What are you saying, Dust-san? You were the one who planned all this!"

I tried to push Loli succubus away as she tearfully clung to my chest.

Damn, she's surprisingly strong. I can't get her away at all!

"I have no idea what you are talking about. Hey, Mitsurugi, don't be fooled by her honeyed words. She's a devil. Devils are the natural enemies of gods. That means she's the natural enemy of that Priestess you know!"

"You are the worst! You devil! Scum! Trash!"

"Tsk, say whatever you want. I'm just looking out for myself! If you're a succubus, try charming me with that pitiful body of yours! See, look at this, she has a devil's tail on her butt!"

As I thrust my hand into her skirt to pull out her tail, Mitsurugi averted his eyes.

Loli succubus responded by repeatedly screaming 'pervert' as she slapped at me. Even though she reveals much more skin on a daily basis.

I really don't get where her line is.

"Well, it does indeed seem that she is a devil."

"Right? Then you know that I'm innocent, right?"

Yeah, seems like everything's heading my way. Mitsurugi seems like a soft person. Even knowing she's a devil, he probably won't be able to raise a hand towards someone who looks that much like a little girl.

This way, everyone will be able to make it out fine.

"Don't fall for his words! This man bought your valued sword for a pittance and sold it back to you with an outrageous markup in order to fleece money off you!"

"Y-You little- Where did you learn that from?"

"You proudly boasted about that when you came into our shop all drunk the other day!"

A-ah, right, I feel like I've said something like that...

-The sound of a sword being drawn from a sheath reached my ears.

"Wait! Can't you put your sword back into its sheath and civilly talk this out? Talking things through is something that only humans are capable of."

"Dwarves, Elves, us devils, and even some monsters are capable of talking too, you know?"

Shut up, Loli succubus! I'm desperately trying to calm him down! Can't you read the mood!?

Mitsurugi raised his sword, glaring coldly at us with a pitiless expression. Ah, that's the expression of a guy who won't listen to any excuses.

I quickly turned Loli succubus around and lifted up her skirt!

"Kyaaa! What are you doing!?"

"Wha-What are you-?"

Are you two teenage girls? The moment Mitsurugi awkwardly averted his gaze, I grabbed Loli succubus under my arm and ran with all of my might.

"St-Stop right there!"

"As if there's an idiot who would stop when they are told to! Did drawing your other magic sword make it hard for you to run? Don't force it now!"

I didn't forget to leave a parting line before I leaving the scene.

It's a pity that I couldn't turn back to look at his expression, but I managed to make a clean escape.

"Say, are you really not a devil?"

"Stop asking me that! I'm obviously not!"

Stop looking at me with such a doubtful gaze. I'm a morally upright adventurer.

## Part 6

“Damnit, I really went through a lot of shit after that. First it turns out that all the young women happened to be out in the city when I visited that village. What was that about a village full of pretty girls? They were all just dried grapes. Then when I tried to report the quest the next day, it turns out Mitsurugi has already beaten me to it, so I didn’t see a lick of gold from that Orc subjugation quest. To make it worse, Lynn found out everything I did, so I ended up getting hateful looks and lectures about paying back my debts. It’s just bad things happening one after another.”

“I know. I was there.”

Loli succubus calmly responded to my grumbling as she busied herself with cleaning up the store.

Because it isn’t business hours yet, Loli succubus and I were the only ones in the store.

“Will you please go home? You’re in the way.”

“That’s not how you speak to a customer, you know?”

“You don’t have money, do you?”

“...No.”

If only it weren’t for Mitsurugi, I’d have a fat purse by now. I’d be laughing and having a mug of beer if he didn’t go back and do something unnecessary.

“It’s all Mitsurugi’s fault that I don’t have any money.”

“Dust-san, do you know the saying ‘you reap what you sow’?”

“I’ve long since erased that phrase from my dictionary!”

“You really are a scumbag through and through. Even most devils don’t have your kind of talent.”

I can’t tell if she’s exasperated or impressed. The loli succubus let out a complicated expression as she continued sweeping the floor.

This loli succubus. She may be talking to me with a cordial tone, but it seems like her opinion of me has dropped by a whole lot since the first time we met. Well, I don't really have any interest in chopping boards, so I don't really mind...

But rather than growing distant from me, it feels more like she's looking down on me...

Is she still holding a grudge over how I tried to sell her out the other day? What a petty person.

"Well, forget it. Anyway, getting looked down on is really damaging to an adventurer, so I would like to request your help in some matter."

"I refuse."

She refused without even listening to what it is. Seems like she's wary of me.

"Now now, at least hear me out."

"If I hear you out, you intend to drag me down to my doom, don't you?"

"Just what do you think I am?"

"A piece of trash that only comes about once in several generations?"

"Hey, don't think I'll go easy on you just because you're a girl. Sit right there, I'll show you what a piece of trash really looks like. I'll make it such that you'll never talk back against me again."

I cracked my knuckles and moved towards Loli succubus, and she tightly grabbed her broom and raised it before me.

"If you do that, I'll make sure you'll never be able to make use of this store again!"

"Tsk, don't think such threats will work on me! Don't look down on me. You've been busy for a while, so let me help you out."

I have no choice but to relent in the face of that. Not being able to use this store is a fate worse than death.

To convince her to go along without using threats... yeah, there's still that method.

"Sorry, I just thought that you'd be able to overcome any problem with that amazing acting ability that you demonstrated the other day... I got too excited."

Acting like I'm genuinely regretful, I lowered my head.

Now then, how would you react after seeing this?

"G-Geez, I can't get angry at you after saying that, can I?"

She blushed and averted her gaze... Girls who aren't used to being complimented sure are easy. Now then, let's continue along this line.

"Your acting was like that of a star actress. The dreams you craft must be a sight to see. Ahh, if only I wasn't broke. I'll definitely request for you when I earn some money."

"Come on, I'm not that great. You're exaggerating. Hehe."

Perhaps to hide the fact that her face has blushed bright red, she hastened her speed in sweeping the floors. She's so easy to trick that even I'm worried for her. Though it's really convenient for me in this case.

"Sorry. I thought that you'd be able to pull it off with your skills, but I should've considered your opinion and not tried to force it upon you. I'll go ask one of the other succubi. *Sigh.*"

I let out a huge sigh. Then, when I peeked at Loli succubus's face from the corner of my eye, she was looking at me with a smiling face that has 'Where would you be without me?' written all over it.

"Okay, fine. Just this once, okay? I'll help you just this once."

Is it really okay for a succubus to be this easily tricked? Are you sure you're a proper devil? Something's really wrong when a devil has humans worrying about her.

Wait, what am I thinking about? Let me change gears.

"Oh, really? Thanks. Right, here's what I have in mind..."

I whispered to her. At first she was nodding along happily, but when it came to the last bit she suddenly balked and turned to look at me with a cold, scornful gaze.

“I’m fine with letting Mitsurugi-san see a dream, but... Isn’t that dream too horrible?”

“What are you saying? You are a devil. I’m just asking you to show him a dream where he gets into an erotic situation with that priestess he likes so much, and just before he gets into bed... she turns into a female Orc and attacks him.”

“This dream will definitely give him some kind of trauma. Though, will it really be alright to sneak into his room to give him a dream? Wouldn’t he detect my presence? He seems really strong...”

“You don’t have to worry about that. Seems like the women who are with him are always making a din in the next room over at the inn he’s staying, so a little bit of noise wouldn’t wake him up.”

I heard this from a very reliable source. Well, I overheard it from those two when they were talking in the guild.

“Plus, I’ll prepare a retreat route in advance in case things go bad. I’ll keep a lookout for you.”

“If that’s the case... I’ll run away the moment I sense any kind of threat, okay?”

“Oh, sure. Now all the preparations for my revenge is complete. I’ll take my revenge for both the money and the women tonight. Mwahahaha!”

“You really are a devil.”

I decided to ignore Loli succubus’ little joke.

## Part 7

Almost as if it was to outrun the dawn, Loli succubus and I frantically ran through the back alleys.

“I knew it, it was impossible!”

“Oh, shut up! Just focus on running!”

Dammit, why did things turn out like this? It was all going well when we snuck in.

Who could've expected that the two women would've barged into the room just as Loli succubus moved next to Mitsurugi and was preparing to give him a dream?

“You bastards! How could a woman raid a man’s room at night?”

“I wouldn’t have been able to give him a dream anyway! He was dead drunk!”

That’s the worst! I don’t know who exactly it was that had him drink so much, but at the very least we managed to escape from those two women who barged in at the absolute worst time.

“Stop right there, you slut! I’ll remember your face!”

“You better not have touched Kyouya!”

Those two sure are persistent.

Loli succubus snuck in wearing her succubus outfit, but I gave her a coat in order to avoid revealing her identity as a succubus.

Thankfully, they didn’t notice her wings or her tail in that dark room.

“I want to fly away, but I can’t fly like this!”

“If we become criminals, we are doing it together.”

“No! If they catch me, I’ll be purified! You can go turn yourself in on your own!”

“I refuse! I don’t mind getting caught by the police, but I definitely am not getting

caught because I tried to sneak into a guy's room! I absolutely refuse!"

If something like this were to be made known, my life as an adventurer, and as a man, would be over. I'll be abandoned by my companions. I'll definitely escape!

"Ah, that was the worst! We managed to shake them off somehow. It would've been really bad if we were caught. I kind of feel sorry for Mitsurugi for having to deal with such women every day."

"Damnit! This is all Dust-san's fault! That was really close!"

In the end, we continued running until dawn, and somehow managed to get away with our lives. Socially or otherwise.

It's gotten quite bright outside when we walked out to the main street. I guess it's about time for the shops to start opening up.

*"Sigh, I'm tired. I'm going back to sleep... Dust-san, did you end up becoming a kidnapper during your escape? Dragging around such a cute girl..."*

What are you saying, Loli succubus, staring at me like that... No, she's staring just slightly to the side of me. Following her gaze, I noticed a brat standing there.

It's that village girl who was pestering me back in the guild when I was discussing the details of the Orc subjugation quest. Where did she come from?

"Uncle, are you done with your work?"

"You sure are up early, little brat. Didn't I tell you not to call me uncle?"

"I'm not a brat, I'm a young lady. Uncle, uncle, what about the Orcs? Our promise? The present?"

I don't remember making any promises with this little brat, but that conversation seemed to count as a promise in her mind.

"Ah, you sure are noisy. This will do, right?"

I tossed a beautifully wrapped box to the brat. After catching it, the brat's face broke into a brilliant smile.

"You found it for me! Thank you, handsome onii-chan!"

I made shooing motions to the little girl, who kept waving at me no matter how many times I looked back.

My eyes met with loli succubus, who was silently observing my conversation with the girl. Standing next to me, she let out a mysterious grin.

"So that's the real reason you were carefully searching the Orcs back then."

"That's not it at all. I just happened to pick it up while searching for any valuables."

"Oh, is that so?"

Don't grin at me like that.

# Chapter 4

## Falling in love with that woman

### Part 1

“No money, no women!”

I stood up and shouted while I was having a drink with my companions at our usual spot in the guild, but everyone else ignored me and continued eating.

“Those fried frog legs look tasty. Just give me a bit. Just the kneecaps are fine. Or even just the leftover bones, just let me suck on them.”

“N-O No. Didn’t you say you wouldn’t need money or women for awhile?”

Lynn let out a soft sigh and looked at me coldly as she helped herself to the fried frog legs with her fork.

“I’ve been good for the past two days, haven’t I?”

“It’s just two days. You brought your money issues upon yourself. You were the one who borrowed money and splurged it all on food and wine in anticipation of the reward of taking down the Destroyer, until you ended up spending more money than the reward covers. There’s no reason for me to sympathize with you.”

“Yeah, you should learn a little self restraint.”

Even Taylor joined Lynn in lecturing me.

What boring people. Men shouldn’t be saving up money like a miser. It’s manly to spend large amounts of money only to make it all back in a snap.

“Ah, this is why I can’t stand poor people. Pah, this beer really tastes great.”

“Hey, Keith, how do you still have money? Didn’t you borrow money and spent a whole

lot as well?"

He went on a spending spree like I did, so how the hell is he enjoying his food without a care in the world? Isn't that odd?

"Unlike you, I made it big while gambling! Ah, beer tastes really great when you drink it in front of poor people!"

Don't fan yourself with those notes! Damn you, lording over me just because you made it big! If I was the one who made it big back then, I would be...

"If you have that much money, lend me some."

"I don't want to. This money is mine. I have not a single eris to offer to Dust. Though, if you were to lick my boots and say 'I will never go against Keith-sama again. I'm your eternally loyal slave', then I wouldn't mind treating you."

"Fuck you, who would beg from a person who wouldn't even help a friend in need? So, Taylor, please?"

"No. Come talk to me after you've returned what you owe me. It wouldn't help you to spoil you any more than this."

He's as hard headed as ever, as expected of a Crusader. Normally, you would happily treat your friends to a meal if they are in trouble. What kind of people are they? As their friend, I'm embarrassed.

"Tsk, fine, forget asking you guys. If you want to apologize, now's your only chance! Right now I'll accept it for just the cost of a meal, some beer, and 100,000 eris! It'd be useless to apologize when I've struck it rich! Now, cry and apologize!"

"No, I won't." x3

"You're all a bunch of stingy little bastards. When I strike it rich I'll definitely slap all of you with a wad of cash."

I say that, but right now I don't even have the capital required to make more money.

My motto is to live leisurely and become rich, but you can't spend money you don't have.

Ahh, isn't there a noblewoman bountiful in both wealth and body who doesn't know what to do with either of them? Nah, there's no way such a convenient woman could exist. Even I know that much.

"Isn't that Dust? What are you doing out here?"

The person who called out to me was the blonde Crusader who was in Kazuma's party. Her looks and figure are both outstanding, but... my impression of her changed drastically after going on that adventure with her.

Also, I was really taken aback by what we recently found out about her.

"Yo, Darkness... no, wait, it's Lalatina, right?"

"Don't call me by that name!"

To think that Darkness was a fake name and she actually had such a cutesy name like Lalatina.

I never suspected that she was actually a lady of house Dustiness, the so-called right hand of this country. She wasn't just an extremely tough Crusader who couldn't land any of her attacks.

I know from personal experience that most nobles are nothing but trouble, but I can't feel that kind of dislike for Darkness. It's probably because she doesn't look down upon the commoners and treats them like equals.

I've always suspected that the good reputation of the Dustiness house is a carefully crafted facade, but it seems like it might not actually be a lie after all.

She's working as a Crusader, but I can distinctly get the impression that she's a well brought up young lady if I squint a little. I really wanted to ask why a noble woman like her would become an adventurer, but that's too direct of a question.

"You're alone? How unusual. What happened to Kazuma?"

"I-It's not like we are always together! Kazuma's just a companion!"

You didn't have to deny it that strongly. People who are in the same adventuring party and what not will usually end up having similar schedules.

Did she have some kind of strange misunderstanding? Well, not that I really care.

“Kazuma’s shut-in tendencies have worsened since getting his hands on the mansion. He should still be sleeping in his room.”

If I had the money, I too would want to lead a life where I sleep until noon and do nothing except eat and sleep.

“So, what are you doing alone?”

“Megumin took Aqua out on her daily explosion trip and I ended up with some free time, so I thought I would go on an adventure with Chris. It’s been some time, after all.”

“Chris is the girl who cried after she got her panties stolen by Kazuma, right? That silver haired thief with the pitiful chest?”

“Hey, don’t say that in front of her. It seems like she’s quite concerned about that.”

If you are concerned about that, then don’t wear such revealing clothes. Though, I suppose that dressing lightly is expected for a thief.

“Now then, I should hurry on. Oh, yeah, please stop doing those stupid things with Kazuma.”

“What? I don’t recall doing anything stupid with Kazuma. All we did was spend all night getting rowdy at the tavern and using Steal on someone we didn’t like the look of and sending them home without underwear.”

“You did that kind of thing... To think that kind of teasing play is possible... I’ll have to lecture him later.”

Watching Darkness’ back as she angrily left, I suddenly thought of something.

“Darkness is the lady of the Dustiness house, right? That means she must have a lot of money... Hoho.”

I don’t have a lot of good memories concerning nobles, but I’m used to dealing with them. Her strange behaviour when we fought together before does concern me a little, but I have no complaints as far as appearances go. In fact, she fits my type perfectly.

If I successfully trick her into supporting me, wouldn't I become a winner in life? Getting married is a bit of a pain, but there's no problem with becoming lovers, right? I get the feeling that she'll easily fall for me if I drop a few kind words here and there.

I think Kazuma mentioned that she is pretty easy as a woman before... Right, first step is to gather information. You need to properly investigate your prey before you go on a hunt.

...Let's tail her for a bit.

## Part 2

Darkness headed outside of town after meeting up with Chris at the adventurer's guild, and I stealthily followed after her.

Are they really going on an adventure with just two people? A party of a Thief and a Crusader isn't terribly well balanced, but I suppose it's not like they couldn't fight. Though, I hope they aren't planning on being reckless out there.

I snuck out after them, careful to maintain a certain amount of distance between us.

Her fight where she got bit by the Rookie Killer left quite an impression on me, but now is a good chance to see what she's really capable of. She wasn't armed or armoured back then, after all.

"Er, umm... Why did you bring me along?"

The loner who I happened to run into and dragged along asked me uneasily.

"It's not like you're doing anything, right? You're all alone like usual."

"It's just a coincidence. You just happened to run into me when I was alone..."

She's a Crimson Demon like the explosion girl who usually hangs around Kazuma. Even though she's an exceptional mage, she's always alone. Whenever she isn't hanging out with Kazuma's gang, she's always at some corner of the guild playing a game by herself.

Her name is Yunyun... Yeah, that's definitely a Crimson Demon's naming sense.

"Then isn't it fine? You would've just been playing cards or chess on your own again if you weren't here, right?"

"N-not at all! I read books and also play other board games by myself! I am also good at observing other people! Err... Oh yeah, I also memorized the entire menu recently!"

Did you memorize the menu of the tavern in the first floor of the guild? Oh yeah, she's pretty much always sitting at the window seat, isn't she?

"It's pretty satisfying when you finally manage to order every item on the menu in sequence, you know? I don't recall how many times I've ran through the menu by now."

"O-Oh. How about you have a meal with Kazuma and his group sometime?"

"C-Can I do that? But, wouldn't it be bad if I were to mess up the mood within their party?"

"It's because you keep worrying about these kinds of useless things that you end up as a loner. You can stand to be a bit more thick skinned. You really don't get it at all. Eating and drinking on someone else's dime is the best thing in the world, you know?"

"I'm not a loner! And I always pay for my friend's meals. Back in the Crimson Demon village, my friends Dodonko-san and Funifura-san would always go "We are friends, right?" and get me to treat them to lunch."

"...If I make some money from this, I'll treat you to a meal."

I can't believe even I'm moved. Just hearing her tales pricks at my heart.

She's a 14 year old brat, but she's pretty well developed and could be said to be fairly beautiful. Normally the boys would be all over her, but for some reason people just refuse to get close to her.

It's not like she's hated or anything. She has a pretty good reputation amongst adventurers.

"Eh, you're going to treat me? But, if it's your treat, it must be because you want me to help you do something criminal, right?"

"Hey, that's pretty harsh of you! Is it really that strange for me to offer to treat someone!?"

"Yes."

"Don't answer instantly! Anyway, back to the original topic. We're tailing Darkness. Come with me."

"Eh, tailing... So Dust-san is the type who can't bear to greet an acquaintance and ends up shadowing them around all day too?"

“...Please, at least call out to them.”

“H-How could I do that? I wouldn’t want to interrupt their day by suddenly calling out to them. Plus, it’d be pretty heartbreaking if it turns out that they don’t actually remember me and end up ignoring me...”

“Even if they don’t know you too well, nobody will get upset over a greeting. You should be a bit bolder... No, wait, why do we keep getting off topic whenever we talk? Anyway, there’s a good reason for tailing Darkness. It’s, well, you know...”

I can’t really think of a good excuse, but I need some kind of reason to convince Yunyun to go along with it.

“Well, Kazuma and I are good friends, but I’m not terribly close to the others in his party. I want to become friends with a friend of my friend. You understand, don’t you?”

“I do! I understand very well! If you become friends with your friend’s friend, you’ll end up widening your circle of friends, right?”

She’s surprisingly weak to the keyword ‘friend’.

...I should keep an eye on her to make sure that she doesn’t end up falling for some bad guy’s tricks. Though, right now, I’ll gladly take advantage of that personality of hers.

“Right? In order to make friends with someone, you need to first gather information about them. If you know what they like and what they do every day, it’d be easy to find things to talk about, right?”

“Yeah, that’s right. Megumin’s always stealing food and getting into trouble, so I’m too busy trying to stop her to worry about conversation.”

That explosion girl steals food? This girl is pretty strange as it is, but it seems like the other girl is a piece of work herself.

“Plus, if you become friends with Darkness, wouldn’t it be easier for you to become closer to that explosion girl?”

“I-Is that so? I-I don’t really care about Megumin, but if you put it that way, I suppose I’ll tail her too.”

It's really great that her buttons are so obvious.

I told her that it was coincidence that we met, but I actually visited places that she was likely to be at while I was tailing Darkness.

And as I expected, she was browsing the books in front of the bookstore.

She was warily looking around the romance novel section before moving to the counter. I greeted her just as she was about to pay for the books, and she almost jumped out of her skin.

In the event that we end up being discovered, it'd be easier to come up with an acceptable excuse if she was with me.

## Part 3

After moving along the plains for awhile, Darkness and Chris ran across a couple of goblins. Even if they only have two people, it should be easy for them to take on a couple of goblins.

First, Darkness charged directly at them, causing the two goblins to focus their attacks on her.

Darkness' attacks didn't even leave a scratch on either of them, but she seemed utterly unaffected by the club blows that the two goblins rained down on her.

Actually, doesn't it look like she's deliberately jumping into the path of the clubs? Chris seems to be trying to find an opportunity to attack, but is unable to find a clear shot with Darkness jumping about all over the place.

"Bind!"

Oh, that's the thief skill that can restrict the target's movements. With this, the goblins will be bound... No, wait, the one who was bound is Darkness. Now that Darkness is wrapped in ropes, the two goblins took this chance to whale on her. What the hell are you guys doing.

Ah, Chris snuck behind the goblins as they were focused on Darkness and stabbed one of them from behind. The other goblin met a similar fate not long after.

...Isn't that a strange way to use Bind? Normally you'd use it on enemies. Also, did I imagine it, or did Darkness jump into the path of the bind of her own volition?

"Eh? Say, did she jump into the path of the Bind?"

"Sure seems like it."

Yunyun slapped my shoulder and asked me a question, and I answered affirmatively.

Though, they are quite some distance away. It could very well be the result of some kind of miscommunication between the two. I should continue observing before forming a conclusion.

The two of them continued on, and ran across a new group of goblins. This time there are five of them. It might be a tough battle for just those two. Well, I guess it wouldn't be a bad idea for me to jump in if things look too bad. It'd increase my chances of success if I were to leave a good impression here.

They are too focused on the enemy to notice us, so we should move up to hide behind that boulder. I'll be able to pick the perfect timing to appear from that vantage point too.

We narrowed the distance between us by quite a bit, but neither them nor the goblins noticed us.

Now that we are this close, I can just barely make out their voices.

"Darkness, there are five of them, so don't do anything strange."

"I know. I won't easily submit to such vulgar goblins!"

"Ah, no, I'm not talking about submitting."

"Even if they forcibly push me down and run those long obscene tongues of theirs all over me, I won't submit! If you wish to do that to me, then bring it! Actually, do it!"

"W-Wait, Darkness!"

Darkness waved her sword around and charged straight in.

I've been getting this vague feeling for some time, but... Isn't she a little strange? She's saying that she won't submit to the goblins, but at the same time she has a very excited expression on her face...

"Aah, because the straps are too loose, my armour is dropping off on its own!"

Hey, why is that Crusader tossing away pieces of her own armour as she goes?

"My weapon is slippery from my sweat, so it slipped out of my grasp... Dammit, I've lost all methods of resistance... There's nothing I can do to stop these goblins from doing as they wish..."

Hey... She just tossed away her own weapon.

Her breathing was ragged, and she had an ecstatic smile on her face... could she be excited?

I know that battle maniacs could get extremely worked up in battle, but that doesn't seem like what Darkness is going through. It's more like... it's the same expression you see on the customers in the succubus shop.

"Come on, stop messing around! Bind!"

Chris just aimed that skill at Darkness!

Once again bound in ropes, Darkness collapsed to the ground.



“Dammit! To be bound in such a situation!”

Wait, hold on, you didn’t even try to dodge that skill.

“What are you planning to do to me now that I can’t move? Don’t tell me, you intend to cut away my clothes with those sharp claws of yours?! Leaving just a bit of cloth on my chest and my important bits, then you’ll use that obscene looking club-”

“I won’t let you say anything more!”

Even though they shouldn’t be able to understand words, the goblins were just awkwardly standing around, and Chris quickly attacked them.

The goblins tore their gazes away from Darkness towards the new threat.

“Wait, Chris, just a little while more! Just five more minutes will do! Just a little more!”

“Don’t sound so disappointed!”

The goblins’ attention were briefly drawn by Darkness as she shouted those inexplicable words. In that instant, Chris thrust her knife at their vitals.

Their teamwork isn’t too bad, but... how do I put this?

The goblins were all taken out in the end, but after seeing Darkness’s reckless actions, I was reconsidering getting involved with her.

There’s no way things can end well if I get involved with her. Even though she looks gorgeous, in fact she’s perfectly my type... But those statements. Those are...

“Huh? Darkness’s actions are really strange, aren’t they? I might be imagining it, but it feels like she’s enjoying getting hit...”

“You think so too, huh?”

“Ah, but it might just be how you fight in a party. I’ve rarely ever fought alongside someone else, so...”

“Don’t suddenly bring up something so pitiful. No, that isn’t it. This is definitely abnormal.”

Darkness is probably a masochist. She's definitely a pervert who derives pleasure from receiving physical and psychological pain.

"She has such a great body, but she's a pervert... and it feels like her case is quite serious."

"Err, why does she seem like she enjoys getting hit?"

"It's best if a brat like you doesn't know about that. If you really must know, you can go ask that explosion girl later."

Making such a happy face when getting hit by clubs... That's definitely a high level masochist. It's best not to get involved with such a troublesome woman.

Time to give up, the only one who can handle her is probably Kazuma... Let's leave before we are discovered.

I slowly turned around, but froze after hearing what came next.

"Darkness, you are going to get abandoned by Kazuma and the others some day if you keep doing that kind of stuff."

"What?!... Using me for everything I'm worth, then throwing me away like an old rag! Ah, how humiliating!"

"Don't look so happy while saying that. I've been meaning to ask for some time, just what kind of man is your type?"

Normally I wouldn't be interested in such meaningless girl's talk, but I suppose I should at least find out what Darkness's type is. Perhaps I could trick Keith into going out with her and reap some of the rewards that way. Plus...

"Dust-san, please wait! Let's listen for a little while more!"

Yunyun was clutching onto my sleeve with a death grip, her eyes shimmering with interest as she listened carefully to what they were saying.

...Girls sure love talking about matters of romance.

"Hmm. I don't really care about their figure, but he must be a pervert who seems to be

constantly full of lewd thoughts, staring at other women with a vulgar smile on his face all year long. He would score a lot of points if he is a trashy person who underestimates the harshness of life in order to get away with as little work as possible. And if he was in debt, even better! Someone who doesn't work and just drinks all day..."

"Okay, okay, that's enough, Darkness! Seems like I need to properly lecture you one of these days!"

So that sort of trashy person is her type. As if such a bottom feeding scum of a person would be so easily... Hey, why are you looking at me, Yunyun?

"Don't you meet all of those conditions, Dust-san? Actually, it sounds like she's describing you in particular."

I don't follow at all.

"Hey, don't say stupid things. I'm not that bad of a fiend."

Don't make fun of me. If I have to pick a person, that description was definitely closer to Kazuma.

"Err, then, please answer these questions."

"Where did this come from?"

"Question 1: What would you do if you see a sexy girl who fits your type at the bar?"

"Obviously, I would immediately hit on her. Also, it'd be nice if I could cop a feel or two while pretending I'm drunk."

"..."

Hey, say something. Why are you silently looking away?

"Question 2: Would you rather gain enough money to live a leisurely life without doing anything, or gain fame and riches after overcoming a tough challenge with your companions?"

"Obviously I'd want to gain a fortune without doing anything."

"I-I didn't even finish my question... *sigh*."

It's pretty rude to sigh while looking at someone's face. Anyone would've given the same answer. There's no need to even consider it.

"Question 3: You are currently laden with debts."

"Yeah, as usual."

"...Question 4: Beer is most delicious when you skip work to drink-"

"Yeah, that's the best kind of drink."

"You really are compatible with Darkness."

This girl is looking at me with narrowed eyes and a gentle smile.

Just about everyone should've answered the same way as me. What's there to even be conflicted about?

Yunyun suddenly fell silent and looked down, crossing her arms and mumbling to herself. Just what came over her?

After doing that for a while, she suddenly raised her head, stared at me with a determined glare and nodded.

"Ahh! Don't tell me, Dust-san, do you like Darkness-san? You wanted to find out more about the person you liked, that's why you were tailing her. If that's the case, then everything makes sense. So that's why you were so passionate about this! I've read about such characters who can't honestly confess in my stories!"

S-She has some kind of grave misunderstanding.

Well, that was my original plan, but, after seeing what just happened, I don't feel like going through with it anymore.

"I thought that it would be some kind of torture for any girl to go out with Dust-san, but I'm relieved after hearing her type. Leave everything to me! I've read a lot of romance books!"

"Ah, sorry to rain on your parade after you've gotten all fired up, but Darkness is a little too~"

"It's not just books, I'm very interested in actual love affairs as well, so I'll do my best! That time with Vanir-san was a little special, but this time it'll definitely work!"

It's useless. She doesn't seem like she has any intention of listening to my words.

Come to think of it, she was really fired up back during Vanir's love incident, wasn't she?

Hmm... if I turn a blind eye to Darkness's personality, she's actually a pretty good woman.

It'll be nothing but trouble if I get too involved with nobles, but if she falls for me, I can get her to support me... Yeah, let's see how far this goes!

## Part 4

A couple of days after that, Yunyun called me to meet her at a cafe. When I arrived, a tuxedoed man wearing a mask, Sir Vanir, was also there with her.

Sir Vanir is an extremely powerful Devil, a high ranking Duke of hell. After a little incident, Yunyun, Sir Vanir, and I will often come together for some reason or another.

This all started when Sir started a side business at the Adventurer's guild to shore up the finances of a certain magic item shop that he worked at, though for some reason it turned into us helping Yunyun make friends.

That ended up heading off in some strange directions, but I think she's slightly less of a loner now.

Still, what is Sir doing here?

"You're late! I thought I told you to meet up before noon! It's way past noon now! Ah, sorry, please give me a little more time to decide on my order."

Yunyun lowered her head to the waitress. Seems like she's been in this cafe for quite some time, if the irritated expression on the waitress's face as she headed back inside is any indication.

"You're ten years too early to get me to show up on time!"

"You're the one who's late! Why are you so arrogant!?"

"You're an exceptional piece of trash, as usual. Moi only came along because Moi foresaw wonderful dark emotions down this path, but to keep Moi waiting for so long..."

"Sorry, Sir. I don't really care about her, but I didn't know you would be here as well, Sir."

"The Crimson Demon girl who strongly reacts to the word 'friend' was engrossed in the books at my store. I saw some interesting things when I took a peek into her future, so here I am."

“What do you mean by not caring about me!? Ah, nevermind. Anyway, about wooing Darkness-san...”

“Wooing Darkness... What are you talking about?”

I've just woken up, what kind of nonsense are you spouting first thing in the morning?

Why do I have to court that high level masochist?

“Di-Did you really forget?... Is your head really filled with tokoroten slime? If we remove your desires, just what will be left of Dust-san?”

I thought she would've been angry, but she suddenly looked at me with a pitiful gaze.

“Hmm? Humans are creatures that live for their desires. There are a few oddballs that pop up every now and then who live to work, but those guys have a few screws loose. You live to fulfill your own desires. You work to earn enough money to live a leisurely life, that's what being a human is all about!”

Yeah, nothing good will come from living a clean and upright life. You need to enjoy life to its fullest. It's your own life, you know?

“I can't believe you can proudly declare that. I'm sure you know that's the thought process of a wastrel, deep down...”

“As a devil, these are the types of people I prefer. What a wonderfully decadent idea! You're just merely saying to live and have fun, but to dress it up as justice and the natural way of things is truly amazing.”

“I'm honoured by your praise, Sir.”

Hmm, wait, is it okay to be happy when I'm being praised by a devil? I get the feeling that I've made some kind of mistake as a human, but I'll ignore it for now.

“Ahh, who cares about that? How could you forget about it after you asked me to help you?”

“Ah, I did say that, didn't I? I got Kazuma to treat me to some beer after flattering him a bunch yesterday, so I completely forgot about that.”

“Doesn’t Kazuma-san have debts rivaling that of some nations? You got someone like that to treat you...”

“Of course, Kazuma and I are true friends, after all.”

“That isn’t true friends at all! It’s just being a bad friend...”

Yunyun grabbed her head and sighed.

She doesn’t get it at all. Bad friends and true friends are practically synonyms.

“Why do you look so tired? Did you exert yourself too much at night?”

“W-W-What are you saying!? How could you ask that of a girl!?”

“Hey, aren’t you misunderstanding something? I was just worried that you might be tired after reading books all night. Say, why don’t you tell me what you thought I was asking about with that cute mouth of yours?”

“T-That’s sexual harassment!”

That’s just something like a casual greeting, you didn’t need to make such a fuss and scream about sexual harassment. Though, when I said something similar to Luna, she ended up not giving me a job for a week.

You shouldn’t talk about romance or matters of love in front of her. Seems like she’s too busy with her job to worry about such matters. She reacts strongly to the word marriage, so you must never mention it in front of her. This is an ironclad rule amongst us adventurers.

“Yes, these are some wonderful dark emotions indeed! It seems I do not need to worry about food with you around. By the way, the adventurer who always chickens out at the critical moment is already wealthy enough to pay off that debt.”

Seems like Kazuma is doing pretty well for himself.

He ended up rich by selling his inventions to Sir. I really could stand to learn a thing or two from his skills as a businessman.

“Right, back to the original topic, I’ve been studying to better understand modern

romance. Please take a look at these. These are a small portion of my favourite books, and they are all trending romance novels.”

She spread the stack of novels on the table in front of me.

It seems like she’s very knowledgeable about books due to being alone all the time.

They all had strange titles like ‘Thy name’, “Avoiding my brother-in-law at the center of the demon world” and ‘I want to hug and eat you up’.

“These are all written by the same author. Apparently he came here from a faraway country. He specializes in writing romance novels, and frequently emphasizes that these are all original works that aren’t copied from any other source.”

“Well, I don’t really care about that. So, what about them?”

“These are all popular romance novels amongst women. That means that what’s written here is the ideal romance that young women desire.”

“I see. I don’t really get these kinds of things.”

“Hmm, human love affairs aren’t exactly part of Moi’s expertise either.”

“Yeah, I know full well you two aren’t familiar with romance from that incident with Luna. So using these as reference, I’ve come up with a bunch of acts that’ll make women swoon. And this is it!”

Yunyun slammed down a piece of paper she had written in advance.

Written on it is an entire essay. Wasn’t she reluctantly forced into helping me? She seems more motivated than I am.

“Let’s start with something simple: Kabedon!”

“Oh, I know that. I often use it when threatening someone.”

“It’s a method to demonstrate your strength and manliness, yes?”

It’s great way to threaten weak looking guys at the bar. It’s really amusing to watch their expressions of fear when you back them to a wall and slam down hard on it.

"That's not quite it. There are some similarities, but it's a different thing entirely. Vanir-san is usually pretty reliable, unlike Dust-san, but you can't be counted on when it comes to matters of romance. Er, Kabedon is when you stand in front of a pretty girl standing next to a wall and slam your hand against the wall next to her head."

"...Isn't that the same thing? What's so enjoyable about having that done to you? Ah, wait, considering Darkness's personality, she might enjoy that."

"That girl with special inclinations would be quite happy about that. Rather than a wall, wouldn't she be happier if you hit her directly?"

"No, you can't do that! That aside, well, this is a bit of a cliche, but there's arriving in the nick of time to save her when she's in trouble. That will make her admire you!"

"In that case, maybe I could call Keith and the others to help out and threaten Darkness... But, wait, wouldn't she enjoy being in that situation?"

"Yes, I'm certain she will feel joy rather than any sort of dark emotions."

I'm fairly certain of that after observing her. Sir also has the same opinion, so I can't be wrong on this.

"Is-Is that so? Then let's put it aside for now. How about giving her a present or something. There shouldn't be anyone who would be upset upon receiving a present."

A present, huh? I enjoy receiving presents, but it's a bit of a pain to be the one giving it. But, yes, it would be effective. Hmm, a present that Darkness would like...

"Say, what kind of presents would make you happy?"

"Me?... Hmm, well, a pretty flower or a-agreeing to become friends with me..."

Leaving aside the first part for the moment... She has a few people she can talk to like Sir and me now, but it seems like her number of friends is still depressingly low.

"By the way, what do you think would make a good present for her, Sir?"

"A whip, candles, or some rough ropes would make good presents for her. She would also be happy with a wooden horse."

“Eh? What is she going to do with such things?”

Yunyun tilted her head in confusion, but I don't feel like going into detail.

Sir's suggestions don't sound too bad, but it feels like she'll stab me the moment I present them to her.

Still, a present. What does Darkness like in the first place?

“It'd be easier if we knew what she liked.”

“What Darkness-san likes... How about asking someone that she's close to?”

“Yeah. Maybe we should ask Kazuma and the others. I'm sure those guys would know a thing or two about her preferences.”

“Moi will continue watching from the sidelines. This will lead to a very interesting future, the devil who sees all, Vanir, so declares!”

“I'm a little worried about Vanir-san's words, but... I also want to gather information, so let's do our best!”

She's definitely more motivated than I am. Regardless of her claims, it seems like girls will always be interested in matters of romance.

Maybe I should put some effort into this as well.

“Umm, can you please place an order already? And please keep it down.”

The waitress who interrupted our conversation had a vein clearly popping on her forehead, only barely hiding her anger behind a stiff smile.

Oh yeah, this was a cafe, wasn't it? I completely forgot about it in our conversation.

“S-sorry! Err, can I get three of your recommended items?”

“What are you saying? Don't just order for me. I wouldn't mind if you were treating me, but if that's the case I'd rather have a beer at a more respectable shop. Oh, by the way, I don't have any money, so don't bother trying to ask me to pay up.”

"Moi am also broke thanks to a certain incompetent shop owner. I don't intend to accrue any unnecessary expenses. Thinking about it, rather than buying food from this trendy and overpriced shop, it'd be better to buy the ingredients and prepare a meal myself."

Listening to me and Sir's honest words, the vein on the waitress's forehead popped. She took a deep breath, glared at us, and shouted,

"Please leave!"

## Part 5

A few days later, we met up to hold a strategy meeting.

Since Yunyun said that we couldn't use the cafe we used before, we had to use a different place as our gathering point- that's the general store I'm so familiar with.

Sir Vanir is busy running his store, so he will meet up with us later.

"I'm still in the middle of my investigation, but it doesn't seem like she wants for anything. I heard it from Megumin, so it's definitely accurate. She said that the only thing that she would want would be some armour or something. But she has already received armour as a reward for defeating that Demon King's General, so I don't think it'll be very effective."

"Oh, is that so?"

Yunyun is really serious about this. Even though it doesn't concern her, she seems to have really went out of her way to investigate.

Perhaps it's because she hardly had the chance to be relied upon, Yunyun was in high spirits as she announced the results of her investigation.

"Also, it seems like she dislikes being called Lalatina. So make sure not to refer to her by her real name."

"Ho~, nom nom."

"Hey, Dust, don't steal my side dishes!"

"Stop being petty, old man. It's fine, isn't it? I haven't eaten anything since yesterday, you know!?"

Seriously, getting angry just because you lost a portion of your side dishes is unbecoming of you. I really wish you would become a respectable old man who would willingly offer food to a starving young man in front of him.

"It doesn't seem that material goods would be very effective on her, so I think we should go with gifting her flowers. There isn't a girl who wouldn't be happy to receive

flowers.”

“Hmm... I’ll take that!”

“No you won’t!”

Dammit, he’s protecting his side dishes with some surprisingly nimble movements. To think that he could dodge this well inside a cramped and narrow store.

Time to demonstrate the techniques I honed during my adventures. Let me show you the difference between our levels.

I launched several consecutive attacks on the side dishes in his lunch box. But, almost as if he could read my movements, the old man dodged my attacks and stepped backwards, increasing the distance between us.

“I fight with shoplifters and troublesome customers every day, so don’t underestimate me.”

“You’re pretty good, old man. Looks like I have no choice but to get serious about this.”

I shuffled forwards, closing the distance between me and the old man who seemed to be intent on protecting his lunch to the death.

I can’t find any openings in his movements. Could this old man be a former adventurer?

“What are you doing? Are you even listening to me?”

“Can’t you tell by looking? I’m a little busy right now, so leave that till later.”

“Don’t treat my store as a gathering spot. You do this every day. I don’t have a single grain of rice to offer to you.”

After the old man said that, he threw the remnants of his lunch box to the ground!

“You bastard! My precious energy source!”

“Stop spouting nonsense, everything here is mine! And, Ojou-chan, you’ll just end up wasting your life if you become friends with this thug, so you should hurry up and

distance yourself from Dust.”

The old man let out a gentle smile that sent chills down my spine and placed a hand on Yunyun’s shoulder... That’s sexual harassment.

“T-Thank you for your concern. But, err, technically, at least in name, we are friends, so...”

“Dust... I always knew you were trash, but what kinds of horrible things did you do...”

He pointed at me with a shaking finger and looked at me with a gaze colder than anything I’ve seen before. He completely misunderstood the situation.

“Hey, don’t get the wrong idea. I’m just being her friend because she’s always alone and seems so lonely!”

“Ojou-chan, this man is like the perfect example of human trash. Just by hanging out with him, you’ll eventually be infected by his Dust germs and end up getting your personality warped, so be careful.”

“Right, old man, let’s take this outside. I’ll fix that rotten personality of yours!”

“If I’m rotten, then it’s really strange that you haven’t already turned into fertiliser.”

Just as the old man I were butting heads, Yunyun forced her way between us. Seems like she’s intent on separating the both of us.

“Oh, please cut it out!”

“You sure are lucky, old man. On account of this girl, I’ll let you go today.”

“That’s my line! Don’t come back here again! I’ll gladly welcome you if you come back alone, Ojou-chan.”

The old man made shooing motions with his hand, and I returned with a middle finger. Because Yunyun was dragging me away by my arm, I reluctantly left the general store.

As the two of us walked down the main street, I turned back and saw Yunyun’s cheeks puffed up like that of a squirrel. Are you hiding food in there or something?

“Geez, why do you always cause problems wherever you go, Dust-san!?”

“I don’t cause problems, problems just happen wherever I go.”

“You don’t even realize it, seems like it’s terminal...”

Germs this and terminal that, you guys really like to shoot your mouth off. If you weren’t helping me, I’d be giving you a proper spanking right about now.

Ah, but this girl is still a kid. She’s pretty well developed, but I’m not a lolicon like Kazuma.

“Um, were you thinking about something rude?”

“Don’t worry about it. Anyway, what were you saying?”

“Like I said, did you learn anything new about Darkness-san? You did look into her, right?”

“Ah, that. I was too busy trying to flatter a treat off Kazuma, so I completely forgot about it.”

“You got Kazuma-san to treat you again?”

“He’s very vulnerable to flattery. Kazuma’s very free with his money now that he has struck it rich. Yeah, such generous people are the ones worth being friends with.”

“I don’t even have the energy to comment on that anymore. I know that there’s no point in expecting anything from Dust-san.”

Don’t get so depressed. You almost make it sound like I’m a useless person. You should care less about the little things and live a more carefree life.

“Oh, have I missed the chance to taste some dark emotions?”

“Oh, Sir, are you done with your work?”

He’s dressed in an eye-catching way, as always.

His white gloves go well with his tuxedo, but that mask of his is very suspicious. In

addition, he's wearing a pink apron over it.

Normally, it would've drawn some strange looks, but the residents of this town are already used to it, so no one seems to mind.

"I gave her a taste of my Vanir style death ray, so there won't be any issues."

"It feels like it'd be a big issue..."

"If that was enough to kill her, Moi wouldn't be having so many problems."

Oh, yeah, that owner of the magic item shop is beautiful, but I've heard that she's inept. From what I've heard, she has a particular talent for wasting away the money that Sir Vanir earns. Even a great Devil like Sir has his own troubles.

The three of us continued walking while chatting about various trivial subjects, and before I knew it, we found ourselves walking down a back alley.

The local thugs often have fights in such places, and occasionally some good stuff is thrown out around here, so I often frequent this place. Seems like I subconsciously led us here.

"Hah!? What are you planning on doing by taking me to the back alley? Don't tell me you are going to force yourself on me just because we've become friends? I'm not that easy of a woman!"

Yunyun had a scared expression and grabbed her body as if to protect herself.

"What nonsense are you saying? I'm not going to lay a hand on brat without even a shred of sensuality!"

"Ah! You called me a brat! I'm more grown up than Megumin, you know!? Please take that back!"

"What a troublesome brat! Sir, you say something to her too!"

In response to my words, Sir Vanir tilted his head and placed his hands on his chin, as though he was deep in thought.

Then, as though he had some kind of revelation, he slammed his fist into his hand.

"Hmm... Young girl who is panicking because your friend has gone on ahead in the arena of romance. Things seem to be progressing pretty well for her lately."

"Y-you're lying, right? What do you mean by progressing well? How far has she gone?"

"Are you serious, Sir? Kazuma, that bastard, does he intend to cross that line before me?"

Hearing Yunyun and my responses, a wide grin appeared on Sir Vanir's face.

Wait, this is...

"These dark emotions are truly delicious. Worry not, that man always chickens out at the critical juncture, so that kind of development wouldn't happen that easily"

"T-That's a relief. If she got a k-kiss or something, she'll definitely brag to me about it."

"You're worried about a kiss?"

"It's quite commendable if you purposely said that to brush things over, but if you genuinely meant it, then it's really unbelievable."

"Eh? Eh? Did I say something strange?"

"Ignoring the kid for a moment, please tell me more about Kazuma's develop-

"Wh-what do you guys intend to do!?"

A woman's voice suddenly echoed through the back alley.

It was more of a demand than a scream, but it is definitely a young woman's voice.

"That came from over there!"

"Right!"

I immediately started running over to the source of the voice. Sir Vanir and Yunyun chased after me.

"How unexpected. I didn't think that Dust-san would rush to help without a moment's

hesitation."

"Yes, moi was even considering not getting involved in such troublesome matters."

"One of these days, I want to hear how exactly you two see me. Isn't this natural? We are in the back alleys, you know? She's either being attacked by some thugs or a molester, either way it's definitely a criminal act. If I help, I'll be able to get a reward from the girl and, if all goes well, even get the chance to hit on her. Plus, I'll also be able to keep anything valuable the thugs have on them. It's killing two birds with one stone."

"W-Wow..."

"You truly are the best kind of person a devil could want, the ideal thug."

I stopped behind the corner and stealthily peeked around it to look at the source of the voice.

A single woman is surrounded by several men who covered their faces with masks. Two of them were wielding short swords, and a third wielded a spear. The woman who was surrounded had no weapons or armour, and had a fearful expression... fearful... Hey, wait, that's a joyous expression. She's really elated right now.

...What is Darkness doing here?

"A-Are we not going to help-"

"Shh, let's watch for a little while longer."

"It'd be inelegant to barge in now. Moi will simply observe from the sidelines."

I covered Yunyun's mouth as she caught up from behind.

There are too many people present. She doesn't seem to be wounded, so there's no need to hastily rush in.

Sir Vanir would probably be able to handle them easily, but he doesn't seem to have any intention of fighting. In the first place, Sir Vanir is a devil who only acts on his own whims, so it wouldn't do to rely too much on him.

No one seemed to have noticed us, so I decided to remain watching.

“What’s the meaning of this!?”

“You are Lalatina-sama, yes?”

“You dare accost me despite knowing who I am!? Just what are you planning!?”

“Well, you can ask your father about that later... Now, come quietly with us if you wish to see him again.”

This might be bigger than I expected. If they are attacking Darkness despite knowing who she is, then it could only be some kind of power play, or they intend on holding her for ransom.

“...How troublesome.”

“Eh? Did you say something?”

Oops, I accidentally voiced my thoughts. From experience, I know that nothing good will come from getting involved in the squabbles of noblemen, but I can’t simply ignore this.

“What do you intend to do if I follow you!?”

“Heheheh, that depends on what you do.”

“Don’t tell me that in order to use me to coerce my father, you intend to forcibly strip me of my clothes while taking pictures of the entire process?”

“...Huh?”

“Then, in order to prevent me from escaping, you intend to tie a rope around my neck and make me crawl around the town of Axel in an almost naked state, don’t you? What a despicable plan!”

“...Eh?”

Even though I couldn’t see their expressions, I can clearly tell that they are taken aback. Those poor things are all flustered and unsure what to do next.

They probably didn't expect that the noble lady they was planning to kidnap would be such a person.

"Should we really step in?"

"...Who knows?"

"Moi can sense feelings of joy coming from that Crusader who's been worried about how well-defined her abs are lately."

I'm of the same mind as the perplexed Yunyun. Plus, if what Sir Vanir says is true, then there's really no need to save her...

Though, leaving her peculiarities aside for the moment, this is a dangerous situation indeed.

It'd cause a commotion if she were to end up kidnapped. And I do owe Kazuma after he treated me all those times. There's no way I can just abandon her.

"Am I going to have to be taken advantage of by unknown men in a dirty alley? \*Pant Pant\* ... But, as a knight, I cannot yield to you that easily!"

The second part isn't convincing anyone.

Looking at Darkness' sparkling eyes and the drool spilling from her trembling lips... I feel my desire to save her slowly slip away.

The masked men also seem at a loss. When the cornered Darkness took a step forward with both arms outstretched, the masked men instinctively stepped back.

Is it okay to call this a fierce and precariously balanced battle?

I feel like it'd be fine to leave things as it is, but I remembered my original goal of showing off my good side to Darkness.

"What's wrong? Is that all you're capable of? A frail girl is standing defenceless in front of you! Isn't it only proper to attack!? Show me your pride as a villain!"

Just who exactly are you calling a frail girl?

“Hey, is she really the lady of a noble house?”

“She looks exactly like the girl in the photo I was given, but... It’s possible that she’s just a lookalike.”

The masked men became beset with doubt. Still, I underestimated just how deep Darkness’ perversions run. Going out with her is the height of madness.

“Why are you so scared of a single unarmed woman!? Don’t tell me that you wish for me to prove that I don’t intend to resist with my actions!? Do you wish for me to strip off my clothes one by one!? Should I start with my shirt, or my shoes!?”

Wait, if you are going to do that, I can hold off rescuing you for just a bit longer.

“No, we aren’t really interested in that.”

“You’re a little too mature for my tastes.”

“Yeah.”

What’s up with those guys? They are all suddenly calm.

Darkness, who was in high tensions earlier, also calmed down upon seeing their reactions and stopped speaking about her delusions.

Both parties stared at each other, and a strange atmosphere descended on the scene.

“Can we go home now?”

“Hmm, it doesn’t seem like any more interesting developments will happen. I sense some subtle dark emotions coming from those men. This is... displeasure.”

“Er, a girl is in a pinch, you know? Kidnapping is a really big deal, you know.”

Yeah... It’d be fine if it’s some kind of sexual play, but I can’t just turn a blind eye to an attempted kidnapping. Can I take this chance to down two of them?

“I’m going out. If things start going bad, please help me.”

“I’m fine with that, but... wouldn’t it be faster to take them down with my magic?”

"If you do that, then I won't be able to show off my good side to Darkness. Even if things end up looking bad, wait till the last moment to intervene. What are you going to do, Sir?"

"It would be boorish for me to dirty my hands, so I'll continue observing."

Yeah, I expected that.

Taking advantage of how the masked men were wavering in the face of Darkness' actions, I jumped out and smacked the two men who had their backs to me with my sheathed sword, taking them out.

"Wha-When did you get here?"

"Dust?!"

"Hey there, I came to save you."

"...just a little while longer..."

I gently waved to the two. I could hear Darkness' mumblings, but that's to be expected at this point, so I just ignored it.

The masked man ignored Darkness and pointed his spear at me.

A long spear, huh? It'd be hard to use such a long weapon in a narrow alley, but since there isn't any space to dodge, if he repeatedly attacks me with it, I won't be able to close the distance... That's probably what he's thinking.

"Don't interfere, or I'll run you through with this spear!"

He crouched into a pretty decent battle stance. Seems like he's pretty confident in his skills.

I casually walked towards him with my sheathed sword swung over my shoulder.

"Seems like you have a death wish! Yaah!"

With a scream, he thrust that spear towards me. I deflected it with my sheath.

How unfortunate. If you weren't using a spear, you might have had a slight chance of taking me down.

I couldn't see his expression behind the mask, but judging from his raised eyebrows, he must have had a pretty surprised expression on his face.

"Boss!"

I reflexively threw my body to the side after hearing the sound of something flying through the air behind me.

An arrow grazed past my side and embedded itself into the ground.

Looking back, three new masked men have appeared from a different side alley!

"Good timing! Take care of this man!"

"Crap. I shouldn't have let my sense of justice get the better of me."

It'd be pretty tough to take on this number of people head on. I would run, but they have me pincered from both sides.

And it might just be my imagination, but I can feel someone staring at me with some serious killing intent. Do they have a highly skilled warrior with them?

Should I seek help from Yunyun? Though if I do that, I get the feeling that she'll steal all of my glory.

"Seems like you wanted play the hero. Well, too bad for you."

He's probably smiling from ear to ear underneath that mask. Just hearing his infuriating voice gave me a clear impression of what kind of expression he had underneath.

Now, then, what should I do? Can I leave a better impression on Darkness by demonstrating my skills?

"Heh. If you guys turn tail and run away right now, I might consider sparing your lives."

"Huh? Do you not understand the kind of situation you're in? Even the two guys who

you knocked out should be... Hey, hurry up and get up!"

"Grr, you've got some real guts to do that..."

The two men who were knocked out got back to their feet. Six against one isn't just tough, it's completely impossible.

I glanced at Yunyun who was peeking around the corner and signalled to her to help me out, but she just casually waved at me as if to cheer me on.

She doesn't get it at all! Is this why she can't make friends? Because she can't read the mood?

Oh screw this! I can't rely on Sir or that little brat. I'll just have to find some way out of this by myself.

"Don't worry about me, just run! Ah, I always wanted to say that line. Yeah, that felt pretty good."

Sorry to ruin your fun, Darkness, but there's no escape route I can take in this situation. Then, there's only one thing that I can do.

"Who do you think I am? I'm the one who defeated the Demon King's General and took down that Destroyer! That's right, I'm Kazuma!"

I boldly declared. Sorry, Kazuma, let me borrow your name for a bit.

"Boss, I've heard of him before. There's an adventurer in this town who defeated one of the generals of the Demon King's army, the Dullahan Beldia."

The masked men started agitatedly whispering to each other. Yeah, these guys aren't locals. I'm quite well known amongst the local thugs. If these guys don't recognise me at all, they must be from out of town.

Then if I make use of Kazuma's deeds to scare them a little...

"Wait, hold on, didn't Lady Lalatina call him Dust earlier?"

"...You're imagining it."

“No, I definitely heard it.”

Crap! Yeah, come to think of it, Darkness said my name earlier, didn’t she? Shit, I really messed up!

“In other words, you’re lying.”

“Did you really think that’ll work? Bah, it doesn’t matter. Hurry up and take care of him.”

This is really bad. Come on, there has to be a way for me to get out of this!

“Right over here! This way, officer! The ruffians are over there!”

“What? Ruffians?”

The masked men turned back in response to hearing the voices of a young girl and the policemen.

Heaven is really watching over me! That’s Yunyun’s voice. Rather than taking care of them with magic, calling over the police allows me to stand out more. She does get it after all.

Yunyun burst into the alley, followed closely by three policemen.

“Tsk, Retreat! Hurry up and run!”

The masked men immediately turned tail and ran. I think I’ll let the police handle them. There’s no need to risk my life to go after them.

I couldn’t feel that dangerous gaze on me anymore, so I suppose it’s fine to relax now.

“Hah, I’m exhausted. I really shouldn’t do stuff I’m not used to.”

“Dust, it’d have been fine if you waited a while more, but you did save me, so thank you. I always saw you as someone who just get up to all kinds of stupid things with Kazuma, but surprisingly, you have a pretty good side too.”

“Surprisingly is a little unnecessary, but you’re welcome.”

Even though she's a noble, she can properly bow and thank someone. I really wish the other nobles would learn a little from her.

"Dust-san! Are you okay?!"

Yunyun rushed over to me. She cut it really close, but I guess I should thank her.

"Yeah, thanks to you calling the police over. That really saved me."

"Ah, that was a trick. I didn't call the police."

"No, wait, aren't there three police officers standing over there?"

The three uniformed men were standing in a row. No matter how you look at them, they are definitely cops.

"Ah, that's Vanir-san."

"Moi has assumed the form of policemen."

The voice coming from the officer in the middle is definitely Sir Vanir's, but what about the other two?

They look exactly alike. Just who are they?

"And these are formed from the shells I shed. Because their limbs are connected to me by a thin rod, I can make them move in unison like so."

The officer in the middle raised his hand, and the two officers around him followed suit... That's a pretty handy skill.

"Thanks, Sir."

"If someone like you who is most adept at creating dark emotions were to die, Moi would be quite troubled."

"Hehe, don't praise me too much. I'll get embarrassed."

"Does that... really count as praise?"

I ignored Yunyun who tilted her head, and looked towards where the masked men have run off to.

There's no sign of any of them. The bloodlusted glare that I've been feeling has also vanished.

I guess you can call this a closed case. It's a bit of a pity that I didn't get anything in return for all that effort, though. Oh, wait, maybe I can get a little reward for saving her?

"Hey, Darkness, as thanks for saving you-"

"Please go out with Dust-san!"

Darkness' jaw dropped in front of me.

I probably had the same expression... Just what the hell is this little brat saying?

"W-What do you mean, Yunyun? And you were here too, Vanir?"

Darkness' eyes widened as Sir Vanir reverted back to his usual form.



"The truth is, Dust-san has always liked you, Darkness-san. He's been searching for a chance to confess to you today as well, just before we just happened to chance upon this situation."

Wait, wait, what!? Does this kid still think that I want to go out with Darkness? No, wait, hold on, I really don't want to get involved with her anymore.

"Eh? Is that so... Do you really feel that way about me?"

Don't fidget and blush like that! Stop stealing glances at me!

And you little brat, don't give me a thumbs up and grin at me like you've done something great!

"I-I'm happy that you feel that way, but, uh, I have someone... No, that's not it! I mean, I'm worried about Kazuma and the others. There's no telling what they'll get up to if I leave them alone, so, I don't really have the time to consider dating and such right now."

Why am I getting rejected? I didn't even confess!

"There'll always be another chance! Let's keep at it!"

Stop! Don't encourage me, Yunyun! You're making it seem like I'm actually depressed!

Darkness, don't give me such an apologetic look! Seriously, cut it out!

"Oh, and, me aside, if you want to be more popular with women in general, you should work on how you usually behave."

Why am I being talked down to from a pervert? Why is a pervert giving me advice?

"Yeah, you should pay more attention to your conduct and your finances."

Great, now Yunyun is getting on my case too. She's the one who started this whole mess by shooting her mouth off.

"Fuhahahaha! I didn't expect such an amusing development to take place!"

"Sir, you're way too happy!"

Grah, this is just pissing me off!

"Stop fucking with me! Who would fall in love with a masochistic pervert with such well-defined abs like you!? And you, you don't even have any friends to talk about romance with, so stop acting like you know everything about relationships! You got all your information from reading books!"

I feel much better after blowing my top. Yeah, stress is something you really shouldn't bottle up. The two of them fell silent after hearing my outburst. Are they too frightened to speak?

"Hey, say that again. Who exactly has well-defined abs?"

"Romance... Friends..."

"Wa-Wait, sorry, I said too much. Calm down. Really, calm down. Please put down that short sword. And it'll cause a lot of problems if you were to blast away with magic within the city. Come on, we can talk this out, can't we? Let's just peacefully talk this through-

"I'll kill you!"

"I-I-I do have friends to talk about romance with!"

"Oh, these dark emotions are delicious indeed."

Afterwards, I ended up spending half a day trying to get away from the two who tearfully chased after me, sword and wand in hand.

# Chapter 5

## That Succubus and those that oppose her

### Part 1

“Listen, don’t think that just increasing the amount of skin you show is enough. What’s important is shyness.”

“Shyness? But don’t men like seeing bare skin?”

“It’s true that they like it, but the process is important. Furthermore, having more parts that are covered adds spice, which raises expectations and excitement. Even if you decide to go with revealing clothes, don’t forget this point. In particular, rather than removing them yourself, it’s worth a lot more to let your partner remove them.”

“I got it!”

Loli Succubus took notes as she listened intently to my advice.

It’s good that she’s so willing to learn. She might be underdeveloped in certain key areas, but under my direction she’ll definitely become a first-rate Succubus.

“Hey, you two better cut it out! Stop talking about such indecent matters in front of my shop!”

The old man of the general shop angrily shouted at us with a face that looks like a boiled octopus. He’s a petty old man, as usual.

“We can’t help it. We can’t enter that store right now.”

“Sorry for causing you trouble.”

You didn’t have to lower your head towards that old man. Loli Succubus is really polite at the oddest of times.

“You’ve conned another child into following you again? Ojou-chan, you shouldn’t hang out with this piece of trash. You’ll get devoured right down to your bone marrow and what’s left of you will be used as soup stock.”

“Hey, don’t keep make me sound like a complete villain. I have a mutually beneficial relationship with her. Ah, that really hurt me. My delicate heart has been torn to shreds.”

“Yeah, and then a cold iron heart will grow to take its place, right?”

“You two really get along well.”

“As if!”

The old man and I said at the same time.

I know this man is bored stiff manning his store every day, and is secretly happy to have someone to talk to in order to pass the time. Is this guy a tsundere despite being an old man?

“Seriously, don’t say such strange things. I’m going back inside. Hurry up and go elsewhere.”

Is the old man gone? Right, now that there’s no one to interrupt us.

“Now that the old man is gone... I’ve been meaning to ask you, but why has the store been closed for the past few days?”

For some reason, the Succubus shop has been closed for the past few days. A large segment of the male adventurers, me included, have been getting dangerously restless with our pent up desires.

“Well, about that... I guess it’s okay to tell you, Dust-san. Can you help us? We’ll be very grateful.”

“Oh, is it something troublesome? Leave it to me. I’m quite well known amongst the local thugs, so if you have a problem with them, I’ll help you out.”

“It’s not related to the thugs. Rather, it’s a more troublesome organization...”

Loli Succubus trailed off and stared straight at me.

It's a serious look that said 'you can't back out after hearing this'.

Don't look down on me. It's not like the great Dust-sama to tremble in his boots in the face of some random bunch of people.

"Oh, go ahead and tell me. I'll handle them no matter what kind of people we are up against!"

"If you put it that way, then I'll tell you. It's an extremely scary organization comprised only of women... 'The association to protect women's chances of marriage.'"

"...Huh?"

I responded flatly after hearing that unexpected name.

The association to protect women's... chances of marriage? That means, what, they protect women who are of marriageable age?

"The association to protect women's chances of marriage? Aren't they completely unrelated to the succubus shop?"

"There's a big relation. Did you know that Axel has a high proportion of unmarried adventurers? Not only that, but the number of couples are low too."

"Is that so?... Yeah, now that you mention it, I really don't really know many adventurers who are married or in a relationship around me."

Keith, Taylor, and Lynn are all unattached. I also haven't heard any rumours of any adventurers getting hitched.

I thought that's just how adventurers are, but I feel like even the middle aged adventurers are also single...

"Well, okay, there are a lot of bachelors in this town, but what does that have to do with the succubus shop?"

"About that, Axel is a town that plenty of newbie adventurers visit to get started, and most of the male adventurers end up becoming patrons of our shop. With only a token

fee and a small amount of vitality, adventurers can experience their ideal world in their dreams and take care of their urges.”

“Well, yeah. Thanks for taking care of me all the time.”

“Thank you for patronizing our store. Anyway, with most male adventurers being able to take care of their urges, well... they wouldn’t chase after women as much, right? So, the number of men who actively seek relationships are reduced. Men can seek release using our store, but women have no such services. The frustrations of the women who’ve been unable to find a partner even as they age past marriageable age piled up... and they secretly came together to form the association to protect women’s chances of marriage.”

“This is the first time I’ve heard of the existence of such an association. And I thought I’m quite well connected to the underside of this town.”

“It’s similar to how our shop is only known to male adventurers. It seems like that is a secret organization only known to single women who are close to or past marriageable age.”

Just like how the men have been keeping a secret from the women, the women also have a secret that they keep amongst themselves. You really can’t underestimate the town of Axel.

“It seems like that association has received information about our shop, and some members have started disguising themselves and showing up nearby.”

“Seems like you’ve really caught the attention of some really troublesome people.”

“Yes. That’s why we’ve pretended to be a normal cafe during the day and only let customers place regular orders. There’s nothing suspicious about that, so we’ve managed to fool them until now, but... It seems like the police will be conducting an inspection tomorrow, so we are in the middle of thinking of countermeasures.”

“Hey, isn’t that really bad? Did that group tip the police off?”

Hearing my words, the Loli Succubus frowned.

Is she confirming or denying it?

“We originally thought that was the case, so the plan was to charm some people at the top...”

“Even a police officer will fall quite easily in the face of a succubus’ seduction. That’s a pretty good idea.”

If they were to offer a discount or something for overlooking them, I’m sure they’ll change their attitude in a heartbeat. Personally, I wouldn’t even hesitate to take up that offer.

“Well, see... the one in charge is a female prosecutor, and seems to be the president of the association...”

“Seriously?”

“I’m deadly serious. Though a Succubus can use Charm to control a female if need be, if a police officer and the president of the association were to have a sudden change in attitude, it would be very suspicious, right? Plus, at this time, there appear to be several priests in the association, so they could easily dispel our charms.”

Both the Axis Cult and the Eris Church hate devils. If they happen to find out about the store, they’ll definitely come in force to wipe them out.

“Just what kind of person is that president?”

“The president’s name is... Sena, I believe.”

Hmm?... I know that woman. She’s a prosecutor with long black hair, ridiculously huge breasts, and a really strict personality.

She’s the one who called me a delinquent during Kazuma’s trial. A thoroughly unlikable woman.

“In other words, you can’t go over their heads. But you don’t have to work yourselves up so much over a police investigation. There’s nothing suspicious in the store, right?”

“That’s the case, but... prosecutor Sena will probably bring a magic item that can detect lies during the investigation. If she uses that...”

“That damned magic item! The police don’t trust me at all, so they often use it when

interrogating me! The constant ringing noise is always annoying... Yeah, that'll be bad."

"Yes... So, I was wondering if you have any good ideas..."

There shouldn't be any issues with them investigating the store. We should take care of the forms, but since everything is done through dreams, there shouldn't be any suspicious evidence left behind.

The biggest problem is that magic item. The idiots at the police station will trust it unconditionally. If there's only a way to fool it somehow...

"If things go well, there'd be some kind of reward for me, right?"

They did take good care of me, but I have no intention of becoming a charity.

"I thought you might say that. Hmm, how about allowing you to use the services of the shop for a week without charge?"

"Right, it's a deal!"

## Part 2

On that day, as part of my plan, I pretended to be a customer in that store.

The news that the police will be inspecting the shop came from internal sources, and the actual people who leaked that information were former adventurers who still make use of the store's services. The police would never have expected that their plans would've been leaked in advance.

Only for today, this store provides a service where they listen to the grumbles and worries of men and provides them with advice. It may look like a regular cafe, but it provides an under the table consultation service. That's the cover story we are going with.

The trick is to include a grain of truth into your lies. That'll make it harder to see through. Changing the hidden service of this store from erotic dreams to consultation gives it an added sense of credibility.

The succubus are dressed like normal waitresses for today, and are acting like the staff of a normal cafe.

Because it would be suspicious for me to be the only customer, Loli Succubus has arranged for another one of their frequent patrons to act as a customer, and he's sitting quite some distance away from me... That's good and all, but who the hell is this guy?

He's wearing some well tailored clothes, but what concerns me is the full-faced helmet that conceals all of his features. It gives me the creeps.

"Hey, who the hell is that?"

I whispered to Loli Succubus who was sitting in front of me while dressed as a normal waitress.

"He's one of our long time customers, and indispensable to the plan that you thought up. I won't go into details, but he can't reveal his face because he's a nobleman."

"Wouldn't he stand out more if he covers his face like this? And... That helmet looks just like the one I sold."

“Isn’t it a common helmet design? It looks just like the helmets they often have on sale in armour shops and the like.”

Well, it’s not like the helmet I sold is the only one of its kind in existence, so I guess I’ll put that aside. Still, why would you use a helmet to hide your face? It just makes you stand out more.

“You said he was indispensable to my plan earlier. Does that helmeted bastard have something to deal with that?”

“Yes. He has an item on him that can interfere with the operation of that lie detecting magic item. I’ve heard that it’s a rare, high grade magic item. It’s very popular amongst the nobility.”

“Ha, they sure are dirty all right. As expected of the nobles. Are they using that to cover up their misdeeds?”

Yeah, it’s definitely possible. That magic item would be a serious thorn in the side of the nobility. It’s only natural that they would prepare some kind of countermeasure.

“Please don’t say that. He readily agreed to help us in this operation, you know?”

“Yeah, I suppose. There are a lot of underhanded bastards amongst the nobility, but it’s a different story if they are willing to lend us a hand.”

“Since he’s willing to help us, there’s no need to worry if there’s something else behind this. Yes, you really shouldn’t worry about that.”

Don’t emphasize that part so much. That’ll just make me more suspicious.

“...W-What?”

Feeling someone’s gaze on me, I turned around to find the helmeted bastard staring at me... It’s really unnerving that I can’t see his expression.

Though... I can’t see his eyes, but why does his gaze send chills down my spine? Is he sizing up my value as a partner in this operation?

“Is everyone ready? The police are here!”

Hearing the voice of the succubus who suddenly entered the room, everyone moved to their positions.

Today's plan has been conveyed to everyone in advance. All that's left is to successfully fool the police.

## Part 3

“Freeze! Police!”

The person who suddenly barged into the cafe is the stern gazed prosecutor, Sena.

The other officers who accompanied her are all women as well... They all have serious faces and bloodshot eyes. Is there something strange going on with them?

“...Seems like quite a few members of the police force are part of the association as well.”

I think I get it after hearing Loli Succubus' whispered explanation. Looks like they are all at the critical age like Sena. The succubi all acted shocked and obediently followed their instructions... That's some wonderful acting. They really do have a talent for it.

Amongst them, there's a big-breasted policewoman who's wearing her hat low... I can't see her face, but she bothers me for some reason. She's searching the place far more seriously than her colleagues.

I feel like I've seen her somewhere before...

“Have you still not found any evidence!?”

Oh, Sena's getting flustered. She's probably expecting some kind of illicit brothel, but, too bad. She isn't wrong, but there won't be any evidence for her to find.

“This is odd! The adventurers definitely do frequent this shop.”

“Damn... could-, don't tell me that the information we received was fake?”

“No, this is definitely the shop that the male adventurers are trying to keep a secret. They often whisper about it in the guild. Everyone's pretty tight lipped, so we weren't able to get any more details, but...”

The big-breasted policewoman and Sena were hurriedly discussing amongst themselves.

Judging from their discussion, that big-breasted policewoman is quite familiar with

what goes on within the guild. To think that the association has even infiltrated so far...

Right, then, I suppose it's time for me to raise my voice and see how they react.

"Hey, can we go home now?"

"No, you are all potential suspects... Wait, you are- the person who has been arrested numerous times due to rowdy behaviour, the delinquent adventurer Dust!"

"Eh? Dust-san?"

A prosecutor calling me a delinquent... Sena's words ticked me off a little, but I'm more concerned with that other officer who called my name. I think I've heard that voice somewhere before...

"Thank you for the thorough introduction."

"Why are you in this store?"

Oh, that's the response I wanted. Right, here's where the real plan starts.

"Ah, this is a place where men can vent their worries. They'll listen to us with a smile, and as women, their advice can be quite valuable."

"You have worries?"

"Hey, what are you trying to say?"

"Nothing in particular... But is that really the case? Is it true that this store is a cafe that offers under the counter consultation services?"

She sure is asking a lot of questions. Seems like she's starting to get desperate, if how much she's sweating is anything to go by.

"Yeah, it is. The nee-chan here are all very big hearted, so it's quite easy to talk to them. I'm surrounded by strong willed women all day, so I can't calm down unless I'm here. Big hearted women are the best."

"Wa..."

“Gurk.”

Sena and the policewoman next to her gasped at the same time.

“Anyway, what did you think this store was up to?”

“Well, err, there are some reports that this seemingly normal cafe was doing some immoral business under the counter. We’ve heard that male adventurers frequently make use of this store on the sly.”

“Well, you can’t really expect rough and tumble adventurers to admit that they complain to women and receive advice from them, can you? Of course they would keep it a secret.”

“I-I suppose so. We were worried that this store might have been the reason why the male adventurers in this town don’t seem very interested in women... but this is what they are actually doing...”

She folded her arms and mumbled to herself. Seems like they’ll go away after just a little more prodding. We prepared a method to deal with that magic item, but it’ll work out fine if they’ll retreat without having to use it.

“There’s nothing suspicious about this store, right? Then why don’t you hurry up and go back? Don’t blame me if they sue you for obstruction of business.”

“Yes, it seems to be a misunderstanding on our part. We’ll apologize to the manager and be on our-”

Oh, is that a success? Seems like we don’t have to rely on that plan after all.

“Hold on, Sena-san. It’s unthinkable for Dust-san to talk about his troubles with women. It’d be a different story if he’s searching for weaknesses of others in order to blackmail them, but this is suspicious no matter how I look at it.”

This girl is speaking as though she intimately knows me. I don’t know who she is, but she sure loves to shoot her mouth off. Does she really want me to fondle her boobs?

“True, judging from his daily activities, he’s a person who would act rather than worry over anything. Plus, there’s no way a man who’s lived a carefree life like him could have any worries...”

"Hey, don't just shoot your mouth off. Hmph, it's because you're so suspicious that you aren't popular with men."

I said some provoking words towards the two who were belittling me... and I felt like I heard the sound of something snap.

Hey... all the policewomen turned to glare at me with a murderous expression. Don't tell me... Are they all members of the association?

Crap, I really stepped in it now. Their bloodlusted glare caused me to sweat profusely, completely drenching the back of my shirt. This is way too dangerous. If I don't find a way to defuse this atmosphere, I don't think I'll be able to remain alive for much longer.

"Ah, but a proper and beautiful woman like Sena would be pretty popular, right? Sorry, sorry, I said something rude. Please forgive me."

At times like this, it's best to honestly apologize rather than to try and quibble. That's what was written in the book I picked up from the general shop, 101 techniques to trick women.

"T-That's not the case at all. Don't try and flatter me."

She says that, but she seems quite pleased.

Was Sena's anger abated? But the eyes of the other policewomen are still as murderous. Seems like I have no choice but to come up with an excuse that everyone here would accept.

"There really are a lot of beauties in Axel. The police officers are all top notch beauties. If it means getting interrogated by you girls, I wouldn't mind getting arrested every day."

Some of them seem to be taken in by my flattery, but most of them still regard me with a suspicious expression. Guess they aren't that easily duped. But that's within my expectations.

"Oh yeah, this is just my own impression, but... don't you think there a lot of single male adventurers in this town? Even though they are surrounded by so many beautiful girls, most of them don't seem very interested in going after them."

“We’ve also thought the same thing.”

It seems like they’ve quite a bit of interest in this topic. Not only Sena, but the other policewomen also came closer, forming a semicircle around me.

It’s a little different from what I anticipated, but I guess it’s time to put my plan into action.

“It’s just a rumour, but... I’ve heard that this town is full of gays.”

“Gay... you mean men who like other men, right?”

“Yes, exactly. It’s a bit of a secret amongst us male adventurers, but it seems like Axel is a gathering spot for gays. That’s why there are a lot of men here who swing that way and have no interest in women.”

“Oh...”

I heard someone take a deep breath. Seems like their pride of ‘this is why we aren’t popular’ is fighting with their common sense of ‘this can’t possibly be the case’.

Guess I should put on the pressure.

“Think about it, it’s a town full of beauties like you girls. Normally, wouldn’t you think that the men would be more aggressive in trying to pick girls up?”

“Do you really think that most of the men in this town are gay... I mean, homosexuals? Men who act all lovey-dovey with each other and walk down the street hand in hand!?”

“Ah, calm down, Sena-san. Your rotten interests are starting to show on your face! Your last marriage meeting fell through because you let your interests show, right!?”

The policewomen stepped between Sena and me, and desperately tried to calm her down.

It seems like Sena still has some doubts. Though, it bothers me somewhat that her face is flushed and she’s started breathing heavily. Did she get too agitated?

And what did they mean by rotten interests... Well, it’s probably unrelated, so I don’t

need to care so much about it.

Right, then, now's where I show off my skills.

"Yeah, of course. Think about it, you guys are familiar with Kazuma, right? Even though he's surrounded by beautiful women, he hasn't made a move on any of them. Don't you think it's odd?"

"Now that you mention it... Satou-san is always being referred to as Scumzuma or Trashzuma, but even though he's living together with three women, I've never heard those kinds of rumours about him. Don't tell me that Satou-san also swings that way... is he a top or a bottom?"

"Your true personality is showing. Sena-san, please try and restrain yourself."

I couldn't hear the second half of Sena's mumblings or the whispers of the big-breasted policewoman, but judging from their expressions, the two of them are deep in thought about something.

Sena nodded to the big-breasted policewoman as if to confirm her suspicions, and the other party replied.

"Umm, it's true that Kazuma-san doesn't seem to have that kind of relationship with his companions. If anything, their relationship seems to be more like that of a guardian and ward."

Well, I know why he doesn't make a move on them. They might look gorgeous on the outside, but their personalities are, well, that. Only someone who has strange tastes, is a sadist, is really rich, or has a saintlike demeanor can deal with the three of them. Or... Kazuma.

Kazuma's a wimp though, so he hasn't made a move on any of them.

Sena, who doesn't know the true personalities of those three, seemed convinced. I might be laying it on a little thick, but I suppose I'll keep pushing.

"No matter how you slice it, it's strange for most of the male adventurers to not even give such beauties like you a second glance."

"Is-is that so?"

Sena started shyly twirling her hair. She isn't quite as bad as Loli Succubus, but seems like she's also easily tricked. The reason why Sena isn't popular is quite clear. Even if she has a huge rack, she's still a prosecutor who has many unpleasant interactions with the adventurers. And with her stiff personality on top of that, it's obvious why no one wants to get close to her.

"Of course it is! Just looking at you beauties is making it dangerous down there. If you want, shall I strip down right now and show it to you?"

"S-Stop, or we'll arrest you for public indecency! R-Right, if that's true, why don't we interrogate one of the customers in here in front of the lie detecting tool? If we determine that there aren't any falsehoods, we'll retreat."

Oh, there it is. I've been waiting for those words.

The other policewomen are nodding in agreement with Sena's suggestion.

"I can believe it if one of the regulars of this store turns out to be homosexual..."

"Umm, prosecutor-san, can I have a moment of your time?"

Loli Succubus raised her voice and stood up.

Because she suddenly stood up, her butt was right in front of my face. Though, with her childish face and her lack of tits and ass, she doesn't do anything for me.

"Yes? You work here, right?"

"Yes that's right. Err, how about interviewing that person? He's a regular of this cafe, and..."

Loli Succubus pointed behind me as she whispered.

Right where she was pointing is the helmeted bastard. Everything is proceeding as planned. All that's left is to see if Sena will bite or not.

"Hmm, that person huh... It'd be proof enough if it turns out to be the case. Right, where did we leave the magic item?"

"It's in the carriage outside the store."

"Please hold on for a moment. I'll go retrieve the magic item."

Without waiting for my reply, Sena flew out of the door. Some of the officers went with her, and the others assumed guard positions next to the door, watching us as though they are expecting us to try and escape.

"Well, we've managed to get them on the right track. The rest is up to the helmeted bastard."

"I'm sure he'll do fine. Please come here."

At Loli Succubus' wave, the helmeted bastard cheerfully walked over. He seems to be breathing heavily. If it's that hard to breathe, you could just remove your helmet, you know?

After sitting down, he extended his hand towards me. Is he asking for a handshake?

"Shaking hands with a guy is just disgusting, but I'll make an exception for this time. Thanks for working with us."

I strongly grasped the hand that he offered.

Now that he's that close, the sound of his breath is bothering me even more. Say, is he breathing more heavily than before?

"Hey, I know you don't want anyone to know your identity, but why don't you remove your helmet if it's getting that hard to breathe?"

The helmeted bastard vigorously shook his head in response.

He's a weird person, but right now he's an important collaborator, so we need to get along. As a noble, I'm sure he will be able to mollify that prosecutor who's afraid of authority.

"I don't really get it, but I'll be counting on you."

The helmeted bastard enthusiastically nodded. He might be a pretty good guy.

"Hey, isn't it about time you let go of my hand? Hey!"

Why the hell is he still holding onto my hand?

My hand is drenched in sweat and feels really gross. Plus the way he wriggles his fingers is starting to tickle me.

“Hey, let go of my hand already.”

## Part 4

After I managed to extract my hand somehow, Sena returned.

“Now, let’s start the investigation.”

She placed the magic item down on the table with a loud smack. After going through countless unpleasant experiences with that item, I instinctively raised my guard upon seeing it.

“Um, so... How should I address you?”

“The helmet man would do fine.”

A muffled voice came out from within the helmet. It seems to be a young man’s voice, but I can’t be certain.

“T-Then, Dust-san, please answer our questions along with Helmet-san.”

“Very well.”

“Just to make it clear, I like women.”

I asked about it before Sena returned, but it seems like the item that the helmeted bastard has is a high value magic item that’s secretly traded amongst the nobles in order to cover up their criminal actions.

It’s only capable of masking the owner’s words. In other words, even if I stand next to him, the lie detecting magic item will still pick up on my lies.

It sure is a convenient magic item. There might be some good folks amongst the nobility, but most of them are scumbags. It isn’t unexpected for him to possess such an item.

“Then, I’ll ask a question. Please answer honestly. Do you like women?”

“Yes.”

The bell didn’t ring. Of course it wouldn’t, it’s an honest answer, after all.

“Then, I’ll ask you the same question, Helmet-san. Do you like women?”

“No.”

The bell didn’t ring. This means that the magic item has determined it to be an honest answer.

Seems like the item that he has is the real deal. In that case, he wouldn’t be revealed no matter what kind of lies he may spout.

“Just in case, Dust-san, please answer affirmatively to this question. Do you like men?”

“Yes.”

The bell rang. The magic item has judged my answer to be a lie.

“Right, now, here’s a question for the both of you. Please answer honestly. Do you like men?”

“You’re joking, right?”

“Yes.”

The magic item... didn’t react to our words.

Though, it bothers me a little that the helmeted bastard keeps stealing glances at me whenever he answers a question. Don’t worry, it won’t see through your lies.

“It’s a little hard for me to understand. Yes, I don’t get it at all. What exactly do you like about men?”

She asked a more specific question. Maybe because she’s used to conducting interrogations, she’s started asking more troublesome questions.

I’m a little concerned that she seems to be oddly curious about that subject, but it really is just a hunch.

It’ll arouse their suspicions if you give a weak answer here. I just have to place my hopes in the helmeted bastard’s acting ability.

The helmeted bastard stole a glance at me and took a deep breath.

"Please don't misunderstand me. Just because I like men doesn't mean that any guy would do. Rather than liking men, it's more like the person I fell in love with is a guy. It just so happens that that man excites me sexually!... It's possible that he might never know my feelings for him, but, after falling in love with him, there's nothing that can get in the way of my love! Watching him work up a sweat in such a life-threatening line of work as an adventurer just gets me excited... I just want to smell his sweat-soaked clothes! But I don't have the courage for that, so I can only look upon his back from a distance and silently curse my lack of courage! Sometimes, I'll go to sleep while hugging the red underwear I bought for him if that day ever comes that he willingly comes to me! I've heard that the Axis Cult acknowledges homosexual marriages, and I've been offering prayers ever since I joined—"

"I see, I see. That's definitely a pure love that transcends genders. Sorry for doubting you."

Hearing the helmeted bastard's passionate speech, Sena sincerely apologized.

To be honest, what surprised me most was how readily Sena accepted that.

Still, his acting was so good that even I doubted if he was being serious or not. He's probably a young master who was aspiring to become an actor.

It's not unusual for the third sons and further of noble families to freely choose their own paths. There are a few former nobles who became adventurers too.

Sena asked a few questions after that to determine if he really liked men, but the helmeted bastard was never busted.

"It seems to be the truth. But, there have been occasions where this magic item has reacted strangely... It isn't ideal to rely solely on this. So, could you give me proof that you really like men? This is necessary to the investigation. It's definitely not because I personally want to see it."

Why are you making excuses for yourself?

"Huh? What are you saying? Haven't we already determined that he likes men and I like women? Would it be enough if we rubbed shoulders with each other?"

I placed my shoulder next to the helmeted bastard, but Sena looked at us with half lidded eyes. That's the gaze of suspicion... Why does she look so disappointed? Also the heavy breathing of the helmeted bastard is annoying me.

Seems like we have to kick it up a notch. Damnit, I don't really want to touch another man, but this is an emergency. Let us compromise for now.

"...Sorry, it probably feels disgusting, but bear with it. I'll treat you to a drink later, so touch me like you are actually into me."

I whispered toward the helmet to prevent Sena from overhearing us.

If he does this after putting on such an act earlier, anyone would be convinced.

I feel sorry for the helmeted bastard, but this is all to prevent the succubus store from getting shut down.

"I'll be happy to..."

Hmm...? Did this guy... just say something weird? I probably misheard him because his voice was muffled by the helmet. Yeah, that's it.

The helmeted bastard moved his hands towards my chest and started wriggling his fingers on top of it.

Graaah! It gives me goosebumps, but I have to endure this. This helmeted bastard is really good at acting. If I didn't know better, I would actually believe him. I just have to endure it...

"H-Hey! Stop! Where are you putting your hands?! Cut it out!"

"\*Pant, pant\*... It's fine, isn't it? It's just a bit more! Just a bit lower! I just want to pat your head a little!"

"Which head are you talking about?!"

This bastard is really going for it! It's fine as far as acting goes, but that part is really bad! What would you do if you awaken something strange in me?!

"Hey, Sena! Don't just stare at me, hurry up and stop him! No, wait, really, officer,

officer!"

"A-ah, right. This isn't a performance, so please continue this in a more private location. We won't get in your way."

Sena finally pulled the helmeted bastard away.

"O-Okay, are you satisfied now?"

"...Tsk."

The helmeted bastard seemed to be quite disappointed as he let go of me. Even if he's a noble, it still bugs me. He's not actually doing this for real, is he?... Nah, that can't be.

It'd be very difficult to get by as a noble or a king without knowing how to put on an act. This guy is just very talented at acting... yeah, that must be it.

"Now then, last question, there are a lot of homosexuals in this town... Is that true?"

Sena calmly asked such a ridiculous question. Yeah, I suppose just the two of us wouldn't be conclusive proof.

I can't answer this question, but it'll work out if the helmeted bastard were to answer it. He has that item that allows him to fool the lie detecting magic item, so there are no issues.

"Well, you heard her, so please give her your answer."

"....."

Hey, don't just stay silent. Did you already demonstrate the effectiveness of your item?

"Ah, could it be that he didn't hear your question because it was muffled by the helmet?"

Loli Succubus suddenly appeared between us and interrupted.

It was probably meant to help us, but everything would've been fine if this bastard would just answer properly. Could it be that he really didn't hear the question?

“Regarding that question, isn’t that obvious? I’m sure Dust-san feels deep down that it wouldn’t be so bad to be in that kind of relationship! The reason why the magic item didn’t respond is because he hasn’t realized it yet! Yes, I’m sure of it!”

Hey, don’t get me involved in this!

I really want to deny it, but I’ll have to bear with it for now.

The bell didn’t react to the bastard’s words at all. It really is an effective magic item.

He’s so passionate about it that it almost seems like he’s speaking the truth... Nah, it can’t be.

“The magic item... isn’t responding. Seems like there are a lot of men in this town who swing that way... If only I knew about this earlier, I would’ve been able to enjoy pairing them up...”

“Did you say something strange just now?”

“You’re imagining it. Still, to think that you swung that way too, Dust-san... To swing both ways, you really are nasty, aren’t you?”

Grrr! I really want to refute it, but if I open my mouth here, all our hard work will be wasted. Just endure it! Dust! An entire week of free erotic dreams is riding on this!

My anger was just about to boil over, but I managed to restrain myself somehow. In order to calm myself down, I took a deep breath.

Right, calm down. This is just an act. I can’t get angry if I want to go along with the helmeted bastard’s act.

That said... There’s no way I’ll be able to stomach this without at least responding a little.

“Now, please take the magic item back. Sorry for troubling you, everyone.”

After confirming that the magic item has been taken out of the shop by the officers, I breathed a sigh of relief.

There’s no need to worry about telling lies now.

*"Sigh-* Raiding a store based on false information and making a fool of the guests, is that really how you should act? If news that this store was raided by the police spreads, I'm sure the number of customers will be reduced."

"Um, I sincerely apologize. It was completely our fault"

She offered a deep bow and seemed to be genuinely sorry, but... that's not enough. The police have taken care of me numerous times in the past, so I need to properly return the favour here.

"If everything could be solved with an apology, there wouldn't be a need for the police to exist. Will there be more such false charges in the future? Ah, how scary."

"I'm terribly sorry! We'll definitely report to the higher ups that there is nothing suspicious in this store, so please, I seek your understanding!"

"Huh? Talk is cheap, you know? At times like this, you need to demonstrate your sincerity. Yes, your sincerity. The cost of obstructing business and future lost revenue... You get what I'm saying, yes?"

Just straight up asking for money is the lowest ranked amongst the various extortion techniques. It's better to drop hints to the other party, such that in the event that something goes wrong, you can state that you never actually asked for money.

This way, even if you end up getting taken to court, you'll be able to absolve yourself...

"Wow... As expected of Dust-san."

If you're impressed, then don't distance yourself from me, Loli Succubus. As a devil, don't you have the desire to learn from example?

"There's going to be quite a few customers who will be too scared to visit this store after you policemen raided it."

"Eh? Who would-"

I lightly patted Loli Succubus on the butt to shut her up.

Don't glare at me. It's just a little bit of flirting, you don't have to be that petty. I purposefully groped your flat ass for you.

“How could that be... Just how should I make up for that?

Sena is really way too serious. Being devoted to her job sounds nice, but a more accurate description would be inflexible. I feel like things will get really interesting if I exploit that strong sense of responsibility of hers.

I can try to extort money from her, but as hardhead as Sena is, she probably wouldn't agree to that. Then, I need something else... Something that would serve as an apology... and trouble Sena on top of that... Oh, that'll do. This will make everyone happy.

“Oh, I know, how about helping out at this store for a day?”

“Eh? Me? Prosecutors aren't allowed to have a second job, so...”

“They won't find out if you don't tell. Wouldn't it be fine if you don't accept any pay? That'll turn it into volunteer work, wouldn't it? And this is a pretty good deal for you, you know? This store is very popular with men due to the tolerant staff. If you were to work in such a store, well, you know...”

I trailed off in order to observe their reaction.

Sena and the large chested policewoman are listening intently.

Seems like they are interested in it after all. Well, they did join such an organization, obviously they would be interested.

I purposefully slowed my speech in order to tease them.

“That means... You can learn to become popular amongst men.”

“Popular...”

Oh, those eyes are shimmering with expectation. That's not a bad look.

Seems like this will become more interesting than I thought.

## Part 5

The succubi needed to have a meeting for tomorrow's activities. I didn't have anything else to do, so I'm just wandering around town.

I've no money or food, so the only option available is to rely on my friends.

But there's no way I can ask them for a favour after what happened in the morning. There's Kazuma, but I haven't seen him around today.

"I'm hungry... Should I sponge off the old man at the general store, or beat up some thugs and earn some money that way... Ooh, that smells nice."

Just when I was thinking about what I should do next, the aroma wafting from a nearby bakery caused me to stop in my tracks.

The smell of freshly baked bread is really appealing. All the more so when I'm hungry like this.

I dreamily followed my nose and came face to face with a large glass window in front of the shop.

The delicious looking bread on display almost seemed to be waiting for the perfect time to jump into my belly.

I can probably get some bread crusts for free if I ask, but what I really want to eat is freshly baked bread.

"I really want to sink my teeth into that baguette... It looks delicious, but I have no money. In other words, is god telling me to dine and dash?"

"If such a god exists, I'll sock him in the face. What are you thinking of doing now? Do you want to spend another night in the care of the cops?"

Hearing someone behind me, I turned around and saw Lynn looking at me with a solemn expression.

Shouldn't she be at the inn?

“What are you doing?”

“That’s my line. You should probably leave before someone reports you for obstruction of business.”

The owner and customers within the store are looking at me with an unpleasant expression.

Yeah, I think it’d be best for me to leave quickly.

“Don’t tell me, you are after the bread crusts too!? Those are all mine, okay!?”

“Of course not. *Sigh...* You really are hopeless. Do you want to eat that baguette? If you are that desperate, I can lend you enough money to buy it.”

“What, do you have some kind of ulterior motive?”

“You keep pestering me to lend you money, but when I actually offer to, you immediately start doubting me... I’m just offering out of the kindness-”

“Oh, Dust-san!”

Loli Succubus shouted my name and hurried towards me.

The meeting just took place not long ago. Did something happen?

“About what we discussed earlier... Oh, am I interrupting?”

She tilted her head as she looked at Lynn and me.

Lynn furrowed her brow as she stared at Loli Succubus... She’s not glaring at her, is she?

“Dust, who’s she?”

“Ah, right.”

I can’t tell her that she’s a succubus. I’ll have to whip up some kind of cover story for her.

"Well, I don't really mind if you can't tell me. It's not like I particularly care about your affairs."

Why did she suddenly start pouting? Does she find Loli Succubus suspicious?

"He-Hey, weren't you going to lend me money to buy bread?"

"Oh, if it's just the price of a loaf of bread, I can cover that for you. You did help us a lot, after all, Dust-san."

Lynn shot Loli Succubus a nasty glare before wordlessly leaving us.

What's up with her? I really don't understand her at all.

The next day, Sena, who had a day off, came to the store... That's good and all, but...

"So this is the store that Kazuma mentioned! You say it's a store that provides consultation but... Doesn't it seem a little suspicious?"

Darkness came along with her.

I think I have an idea of why she's here. I recall speaking about Sena in a drunken haze after Kazuma treated me to some beer last night.

Then Kazuma got interested and said 'How about letting Darkness work there too' or something along those lines, and now here we are.

"Lalatina-san, I think it'll be best if you head back..."

"Please stop calling me by that name. Darkness is fine. I ended up falling for Kazuma's provocations, but I've heard that the female workers here are very popular amongst men. Working here might be pretty good training for me. Kazuma keeps calling me a pervert that looks pretty but is rotten on the inside. Learning the techniques of this store might be useful in getting him flustered!"

She's surprisingly motivated. She's a troublesome fellow, but amongst Kazuma's companions, she's the easiest to deal with... Right?

Plus, Darkness might be quite suitable for the work here.

"Sena-san, and... Darkness-san, I'll be your manager for today. Pleased to work with you."

Loli Succubus, who was wearing a mask that covered her eyes, gave them a quick bow.

I made up an excuse that we are having a masquerade themed event today, so everyone was wearing a mask. This allows Sena to wear a mask too, allowing her to conceal her identity and keep others from realizing that she's moonlighting...

"Pleased to work with you."

"I'll be in your care today... Say, have we met before?"

Darkness pondered as she stared at Loli Succubus' face.

Oh, yeah, they ran into each other during that incident at Kazuma's mansion, right? It's a good thing that she's wearing a mask, then.

"N-no, it's probably your imagination. Anyway, I'll start with a simple explanation of your job. We'll be listening to the worries of our customers. You must appear interested in them and, no matter what they say, you mustn't disagree. Then, you give them some advice on what they should do in the future."

"I see, so it's that kind of job."

"It sounds complicated."

Sena repeatedly nodded as she took down notes. Darkness merely let out an impressed sigh.

"Now then, please change into your costumes. You can use this changing room."

"It's fine if you just change right here, you know?"

"Dust-san, please don't butt in. You'll just complicate things."

She's really been talking back to me a lot recently. Seems like there's a need to once again teach Loli Succubus how great I am. I'll teach her a lesson after this is over.

I stared at both of their asses until they vanished behind the door... Yeah, their bodies

really are amazing. But, their personalities...

“Wait, isn’t this just lingerie!?”

“There’re even some wings attached to the top! P-Please don’t push me!”

A scream rang from behind the door. Seems like the two of them are really taken aback.

Today’s costumes are specially made for them. Though, it’s no different from how the workers here usually look.

Accompanied with a loud bam, the door flew open, and Sena and Darkness appeared before me dressed as succubi.

“You look pretty great!”

With just a little bit of cloth covering their chest and lower bodies, it really does look like they are wearing nothing but lingerie. Plus, the way they desperately tried to hide their bodies really adds that extra spice.

The other succubi are already used to being in this outfit, so they wouldn’t appear to be embarrassed, but Sena and Darkness are blushing bright red and acting all shyly... Yeah, this is the best.

“I can’t possibly appear in front of other people in such a shameless outfit!”

“You want me to parade myself in front of lustful men in such a lewd outfit... What a great reward! Er, I mean, how humiliating!”

Sena was pressing down on her chest that seemed like it could burst forth from the piece of cloth holding it at any moment. Looking at her breasts getting compressed like that made it seem all the more erotic.



And the pervert standing next to her was excitedly muttering to herself, as per normal.

“It’ll be fine, there are only regular customers here today. And touching is off limits, so rest assured.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about.”

“Touching is off limits... I see...”

Don’t sound so disappointed, Darkness. If you want someone to touch you so badly, I can... No, I’d better not. I really don’t want to get any more involved with her, and laying a hand on one of Kazuma’s companions doesn’t sit well with me.

Leaving the detailed explanations to the other succubi, Loli Succubus walked over to me.

“Dust-san, what of the customers?”

She whispered to me in order to keep Sena from overhearing.

“Yeah, there are only my acquaintances in the cafe. I’ve also made preparations with the adventurers not to let anyone else in.”

If a customer who doesn’t know anything were to walk in, it would blow the entire act wide open. All the customers who are here today have been instructed to pretend like they only came here to get advice.

“Thank you very much. Everything will be alright if we can make it through today, right? It’d be nice if we can go back to normal in a day or two.”

“The men are getting close to their limits. It’s going to be problematic if this place doesn’t reopen soon, in more than one way.”

“Sorry for troubling you so.”

Seems like the explanation is over, and the two of them are standing next to a wall. Sena had her head down low and covered her chest with the survey form, and Darkness seems to be equally embarrassed, but... her smile isn’t hidden at all.

The shop opened for business, and the customers flocked in. Every one of them are

people I know.

They all gave me a nod of acknowledgement as they walked past me. Now then, who would be Darkness's and Sena's customers?

Darkness's customer seems to be a burly man with a mohawk. I often see him in the adventurer's guild, but he doesn't seem to be in any parties and nobody seems to know what he does. Just who is that mohawked guy, I wonder?

Now then, what about my original target... Sena was instructed to receive the customers by the succubi, but she seems to be hesitating, constantly stepping forwards and back.

I continued observing her, and she remained in that state for an hour. It seems like she'll be doing that forever.

Though, she seems to be studying the customers intently despite her embarrassment. Is she studying how to be hospitable? Sounds like the stiff as a board Sena alright.

Oh well, guess I should give her a little push.

"Hey, call Sena over. Let's have her service me."

"Eh? Isn't that kind of horrible for her?"

"I'm helping the lonely Sena out by being her customer, you know? It's not like I'm getting in her way. She should be thanking me."

"Well, I suppose... I'll call her over then."

Perhaps because she wasn't fully convinced, but Loli Succubus sure is dragging her feet as she headed off. She whispered to Sena, and Sena shot me a contemptuous look before starting an argument...

After a few minutes, Loli Succubus seems to have mollified Sena somewhat and dragged her over to my seat.

Her brows were furrowed so tightly that wrinkles appeared on her forehead. That really isn't a face you should make in the service industry.

“Do you need something?”

“Sena-san, smile. I’ll be by your side, so relax.”

“After offering to do this as compensation, it’d be quite embarrassing if you didn’t do any work, now wouldn’t it? I specifically called you over out of the kindness of my heart. You should be thanking me.”

“That’s... thank you... *Sigh*”

Sena averted her eyes and sighed. What a brazen attitude to take in front of a customer.

Ah, well, I’ll let it slide. I’m in a very good mood today, after all. Now, then, how should I play with her?

“Right, now, listen to my worries and give me some advice.”

“Very well, I’ll give you advice if I understand your worries.”

She sure is being arrogant for a waitress. Feeling her sharp gaze staring at me from behind the mask... It feels like I’m getting interrogated.

“Hmm, then, tell me a way to easily get away with committing petty crimes.”

“No I won’t! Please live a proper life!”

I thought it would be the most appropriate question for a prosecutor.

“Tsk, you sure are petty. Then, tell me how did you get such enormous boobs. I can’t bear to see the pitiful chests that Lynn and that loli over there have. I think they’ll be happy if I tell them a way to grow their boobs. I was planning to ask Luna that question later.”

“That’s none of your business!”

For some reason, Loli Succubus puffed her cheeks and got angry again. Even though I was asking that out of the kindness of my heart.

“Committing sexual harassment right in front of a prosecutor, huh? That’s pretty bold of you.”

“What are you saying? You’re just a waitress today. Would you treat your customers properly? Hurry up and give me an answer. Come on, hurry up and show me all those hidden skills that you use in your interrogations.”

I casually said while placing both feet on the table, and in response, I could see a blood vessel start throbbing on Sena’s temple.

“You little... You better remember this when I catch you again.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m so afraid.”

I’m pretty much used to such threats. You’re going to have to step up your game if you want to scare me.

“Now, now, the two of you are a customer and a waitress today, so please get along. You’re attracting a lot of attention, you know?”

“What are you guys staring at?! This isn’t a performance!”

“You really will bare your fangs at anyone...”

“That’s not true at all. If it’s someone that I can’t defeat no matter what, I’m prepared to get down on my knees and lick his boots.”

“Why are you proudly boasting about something like that?”

“I knew that you’re scum, but I didn’t know you’re this bad.”

This isn’t that surprising. It’s just understanding how the world works.

Only those who understand that will be able to make it in an unstable and dangerous job like an adventurer.

“Dust-san, please ask something a little more proper. It’s Sena-san’s first day, so if you have something easy to understand...”

Even if you say that, I’ve never consulted with a woman before. Something I’m worried about...

“Well, there’s money. I’d really want to strike it rich. Do you know of any good ways to

do so?"

"Just work hard at a job. Still, isn't it odd for you to be troubled over money? The bounty for taking out the Destroyer should be distributed to all the adventurers. With that money, you shouldn't have any financial troubles for quite some time."

"Ah, that. I drank and gambled that bounty away. Actually, I still have debts left over from that spree."

"Why does it sound like you are proud of that?"

"..."

Don't look at me like that. I thought I would've gotten a bigger portion of the bounty, but then most of it was awarded to Kazuma.

Though, I can't bring myself to envy him. I'd rather not be saddled with that many debts. Kazuma is really unlucky. He's already deep in debt from taking out the Demon King General, and now he's pretty much buried in it.

I would be considering giving up on life if I had that much debt, and he still needs to take care of those three "beauties".

Looking at Darkness blushing bright red and saying something like 'Don't look at me! Don't look at me with those lewd gazes!', I can't help but sympathize with him.

So I was really surprised when I heard that he managed to clear off his debts.

"You wouldn't resort to kidnapping or murder to cover your debts, would you?"

"Don't say that. I haven't fallen that far. I'm not going through that kidnapping business ever again."

Fraud and blackmail is one thing, but there's no way I would stoop that low.

"Ever again...?"

"Y-You..."

Don't step away from me with such a frightened expression.

I remembered my past after hearing the word kidnapping and accidentally let my mouth slip. Ah, I was young back then... Though, it's not that long ago.

"Hey, why are you looking at me like that? Do you really think I'm that low of a person?"

It's not just Sena, even Loli Succubus is looking at me with a suspicious gaze.

"Leaving that aside, sorry, I said too much. I shouldn't have suspected you without proof. You might often commit some petty crimes, but there's no reason to suspect that you'd be capable of doing something that serious... Hmm, I suppose it's fine to tell you. You seem quite familiar with the local thugs, so have you heard any rumours of a strange criminal organization sneaking into this town recently?"

Sena suddenly became serious, but I haven't heard anything like that.

There's only a couple of recent crimes that I know of.

"Isn't that just a rumour? Well, if you ask me about recent crimes... Apparently some burglars tried to sneak into the old man's general shop recently, but they ended up running into a trap he prepared to deal with me and got scared away."

"Eh? Huh..."

"There's also the time I got into a fight with some debt collectors after they demanded that I return the money I owe right now"

"I think I heard about that before..."

"Oh, and there's the time Darkness got accosted by kidnappers in a back alley. She was really enjoying herself back then. That's about all I know."

"Wait, hold on, isn't that a big deal!? What happened to the kidnappers?"

"Hmm, who knows? You should probably ask Darkness if you want the details."

"Yeah. I'll ask her for the details later."

A criminal organization, huh? Isn't it a little thoughtless for them to come to this town? Sure, it's a town for newbie adventurers, but there are quite a few powerful people living here.

Plus, most of the residents of this town aren't the type to be easily disheartened. If I want to commit some kind of major crime, I definitely wouldn't choose this town to be my target.

"Anyway, changing the topic a little... Is it really true that most of the male adventurers in this town like other men?"

"Hey, you're trying to dig up that topic again? Hasn't that been settled?"

"This is unrelated to my personal interest, it's an honest question. If there are really so many men here who have no interest in women... would they really be lewdly staring at the girls like that?"

Hearing Sena's question, I suddenly broke out in cold sweat.

I discreetly looked at my surroundings, and found that every single one of my friends have their gazes glued to succubi's tits and asses.

Ah... Shit! How could I have forgotten about this!? Everyone here is an unrepentant pervert!

What should I do? It doesn't seem like any one of them is in the mood to listen to me right now.

"Dust, let me ask you again. Are there really a lot of men in this town who have no interest in women?"

She has a serious gaze behind that mask of hers. Come on, coming up with an explanation to worm my way out of this is what makes me great! Don't give up yet, there must be a way out of this!

"I can bring out that lie detecting magic item again, if you want. Just for the two of us."

"Don't belittle me, Prosecutor Sena. I'm sorry!"

I jumped off from my seat and immediately prostrated myself before her. Now that it's come to this, I have no choice but to sincerely apologize!

"Why don't you tell me the details, hmm?"

Ah, this is totally an interrogation now.

## Part 6

After sending the customers and Darkness away, the succubi and I were left sitting on our knees in the middle of the store. Of course, Sena is here too.

“To think there’d be a shop in this town run by succubi... That’s why a few of our superiors wanted to stop the investigation yesterday. So everything about homosexuality was a lie...”

There are quite a few former adventurers who went into the police force, after all.

Sena crossed her arms and seemed to be quite deep in thought. Seems like she’s still trying to come to terms with this unexpected revelation.

“But, please understand, the adventurers and us have a peaceful, mutually beneficial relationship. Aren’t there fewer crimes committed by men in this town compared to other cities?”

Hearing the sexy store owner’s words, Sena’s expression stiffened.

Cities with a high population of adventurers normally tend to have a higher crime rate. It’s a job that involves fighting with monsters, after all. Naturally, it would attract a rough crowd.

But, thanks to the succubi in this town, the adventurers are able to easily soothe their pent up desires and are thus far less likely to cause trouble. As a prosecutor, Sena should be very well aware of what kind of influence they bring.

“But I can’t just ignore the existence of succubi in this town... If things go on like this, the rate of women getting married would just get lower and lower.”

She won’t let us go that easily, huh. But, that’s within my expectations.

I softly whispered to the manager, and she immediately brightened up, enthusiastically nodding to me.

“Then, how about we make a deal?”

“You’re asking me to make a deal with a devil? Do you think I’m stupid?”

She sounds like she doesn't even want to entertain the thought, but I wonder if she'll say the same thing after hearing this.

"If you'll let us go... It's possible for us to make Sena-sama appear in the dreams of the men you like every night and make them fall for you. Apart from that, we can let you experience various situations in your dreams. Even those desires that you can't speak out loud can be realized in your dreams."

"Please tell me more details!"

Faster than the eye could see, Sena rushed in front of the succubus and grasped her hand.

"Does that mean it's settled?"

I smiled at Loli Succubus who was tilting her head.

"Seems like it. You sure worked hard today. Isn't it great that you'll be able to resume your normal activities soon?"

"Yes. That's a relief. You really helped us out, Dust-san."

"I'll be counting on your service for this week, then."

"Yeah, for one week starting from today. Don't worry, us devils value our contracts very highly."

"Oh, I'll be looking forward to it. I won't have to worry about this for the week, then. All I need to do now is find a place to sleep and food to eat."

Receiving gratitude and a reward, yeah, this really is the best.

Well, it's good that everything is settled nicely. I'll be looking forward to having some sweet dreams tonight.

"Oh, yeah, Dust-san, there's something I need to speak with you about."

Sena seemed to have concluded her talks with the succubus and made her way over to me.

“What now? Isn’t the issue with the shop settled?”

“It is, but this is a different story. Didn’t you mention something about getting into a fight with some debt collectors earlier? The money lenders reported this case to us some time ago, so I would like you to tell me more details about that.”

With a wide smile, Sena firmly grabbed my shoulders.

“Wa-wait a minute.”

“I will not. You told me to show you the hidden skills that I use in my interrogations, right? Then, for the next two weeks, let me give you a thorough demonstration. Seems like you’ve secured a place to sleep and food to eat. Isn’t that great?”

Crap! She’s far stronger than she looks! I can’t wiggle my way out of her grip!

Does she hold a grudge over what happened earlier?

“Hey, don’t just stand there, help me!”

I shouted towards Loli Succubus who was just enjoying the show. After seeing both mine and Sena’s faces, she smiled and whispered to me,

“If you are being kept in the detention center, we won’t be able to visit. There’s an anti devil barrier after all... Also, we can’t do anything if you don’t tell us what you wish to dream about... Oh, the contract is already made.”

Contract? You’re not talking about our agreement, right? That’s not it, right? What’s with that suggestive smile of yours?

“Hey, you can’t be... the one week of free service you promised me...”

“Yes, it’s invalid. I can’t help it if it’s impossible to accomplish. Devils place a lot of value in contracts, so I can’t change it now.”

“Wait, hold on, you’re joking, right? Hey, don’t just laugh, look at me! Hey, Sena-sama, can we please delay this detention business for a week? Please listen to me! You god damned devils!”

“Hey, isn’t the food here yet!? I want to have a full course today!”

I yelled at the guardsman while lying on a thin blanket in the detention cells that have become my second home by now.

“Shut up! You just had lunch not a moment ago! Are you going senile?”

“Then bring me some dessert. There’s a trendy cafe that opened up on the main street recently, right? Just get me something from that cafe.”

Instead of a reply, I heard a bucket crash against the bars of the cell. This bastard dares to throw stuff at me.

I’ve been detained in the cell for two days now. Seems like I’ll be in this cell for a week at the very least.

“Well, I don’t have any money anyway, so I guess it’s fine. It’s a pity I missed out on that one week of free service, though. Will those guys be fine, I wonder? I got thrown in here without the chance to say anything to them. Lynn’s probably fuming.”

She might look mature at a glance, but she can get quite agitated. Last time, she started flinging magic at me without even saying a word... I should probably come up with some excuses.

“Hey, Dust! I got a little a gift for you!”

The guardsman whom I’ve become very familiar with slid a long object wrapped in a white paper through the bars.

When I removed the wrappings, I found a warm baguette waiting underneath.

There’s no need to ask who bought it for me. She probably bought it while complaining.

“A baguette from that bakery, huh... Thanks.”

Even though she isn’t here, I offered my thanks to that tomato-loving companion of mine.

## Interlude

### The treasure of a certain nobleman

“Good morning. Today’s weather is great, isn’t it?”

I smiled at the photo taped to my body pillow.

It’s a picture of Dust’s gallant expression when he was threatening a newbie adventurer.

It’s wonderful no matter how many times I look at it. It’s the best picture that the thief I instructed to follow him with Lurk gave to me. It’s one of my precious treasures.

“I feel great this morning too. This is all thanks to the Succubi.”

After learning about that store by chance, I’ve been able to experience my desires in my dreams. Thanks to that, I’ve been waking up refreshed every morning. I need to properly express my gratitude.

Those sweet experiences with Dust-san that I could never have in real life. Thanks to those dreams, I’m full of motivation today.

Associating with devils like succubi is unforgivable for a member of the Axis Cult, but I’m sure Aqua-sama will forgive my pure desires. I’m sure of that.

After changing and having my breakfast, I left for the town as usual.

At this time, Dust-san should either be sleeping in a drunken stupor, or perhaps playing some games at the gambling den until morning. According to the report left on my windowsill this morning, he was out drinking with Kazuma until late last night, so he should still be sleeping.

Kazuma is that adventurer with three beauties in his party, right? Even though he already has a harem, he’s making a move on Dust-san. And here I am only able to observe him from afar, only receiving secret photos and daily reports of him...

Cheerfully drinking beer with and putting his arms around the shoulders of the man

that I can only meet in my dreams...

"How enviable!"

I don't mind if Dust-san makes a move on a girl, but I can't forgive any guy other than me getting close to him.

Wait, no, I can't lose my cool right now. There's a huge gap between me and Dust-san in the first place. I need to relax.

*Sigh...* Will the day ever come where I'll be able to sit next to Dust-san and chat normally with him?

On my walk, I picked up several items from the shops I passed by. There occasionally are some treasures hidden amongst these antiques, so you can't discount them.

This necklace is being sold as an item that can block the effects of the lie detecting magic item, but it seems like a fake to me. It's pretty popular amongst the nobility as of late, but those guys get duped way too easily.

Though, it's cheap and looks pretty stylish, so I guess I'll buy it.

"Welcome, feel free to browse. I just got my hands on a high quality helmet recently! It's going for a bargain!"

That voice is the owner of that general store who constantly gets into squabbles with Dust, isn't it? He keeps constantly parading how close he is to Dust in front of me... Wait, that helmet on display in front of his store... Could it be?

"Excuse me."

"Ah, welcome. Oh, a noble? Is there something you need?"

He knew what I am right away. Well, I do have the eyes and hair of a noble, so I guess it's not that much of a surprise. In order to avoid implicating Dust-san, I shouldn't reveal my identity here. In fact, it's probably best to disguise myself when I visit here again.

"About that helmet."

"Oh, this? You have a good eye! It might be second hand, but it is very well made. I'm sure you can tell what a bargain it is."

It's indeed pretty well made, but I don't really care about that. That shape, that colour, could it be the helmet that Dust once used?

"How did you get your hands on this helmet?"

"Oh, I got it from a delinquent adventurer who often comes to my shop to cause problems. I bought it off him at a high price."

There's no mistake! Oh, thank you, Aqua-sama! I'm so glad that I offered prayers every day after joining the Axis Cult. Thank you, my goddess!

I received a report about the magic sword, but I didn't know about this helmet at all. I'll have to give that thief some more detailed instructions later.

"Will you sell that to me?"

"You're buying it? Then I'll prepare a bag, please hold on for a minute."

"No, this is fine."

I don't want to wait even a second more. Hurry up and give me the helmet that Dust-san used to wear! Come on!

"Is-is that so? Well, then, thank you for your patronage."

"Here, keep the change."

I hurriedly handed over the money and snatched the helmet off his hands. The store owner seemed shocked, but I couldn't care less about that right now.

Hugging the helmet, I rushed into a nearby alley.

There's no one around... right?

T-T-This is the helmet that touched Dust-san's hair, skin, and lips, right?

*"Sniff*This is the smell of Dust-san! There's the faint smell of his sweat lingering amidst

the smell of steel. This is, this is-!"

Just taking a small sniff is enough to make me lightheaded. But it's not over yet. This is the main event. I'll do it! I'm really doing it!

I held the helmet with both hands and lifted it to the sky.

Aah, I'm going to become one with Dust-san now... Helmet on!

"I'm surrounded by Dust-san right now! What a wonderful feeling! Ah ah ah ah ah! It's okay to lick the insides of the helmet, right? It's mine now!"

I won't let this leave my side! I'll definitely wear this every time I go out from now on.

I really want to wear it at home too, but I feel like my parents would object to it.

On that day, I gained yet another treasure.

# Chapter 6

## Overcoming that past

### Part 1

“So that’s what happened. It was really horrible.”

I gestured as I conveyed the events of two weeks ago to my companions. Well, I might have exaggerated and left out certain bits, but it’s mostly accurate.

That said, they’ve just been staring at me in silence since I started. Hey, come on, at least react a little.

“And then they threw me into the cells for two weeks. They made me work for free and gave me that sort of horrible treatment afterwards.”

I’ve concluded my story, but Lynn, Taylor and Keith didn’t even react at all. It’s almost like I’m not even here.

“The bugs sure are noisy this morning. Anyway, what time do we head out, Keith?”

“Yeah, they’re making a buzz alright. And it’s about ten minutes from now. He should be arriving any moment.”

“He’s a responsible person. I’m sure he’ll be punctual.”

They’re completely ignoring me to talk amongst themselves. Yeah, I’m sorry for dropping out of contact for two weeks, but it’s not like I wanted that to happen. You guys don’t need to get that angry.

I thought it would work out since Lynn knew about it, but was I too naive?

“Hey, it’s pretty hurtful to ignore me like this, you know? If you guys can’t hear me, I’m going to start talking about some really obscene stuff!... So, what’s the quest?”

Nobody answered my question. T-These guys...

"Oh, it can't be helped if you can't see me. That means that I can do anything, right? Then let's start with that pitiful chest—"

With a dull thud, a dagger slammed into the table, just inches from my hand.

Needless to say, the one who did that was Lynn. She was looking at me like she was looking at some kind of gross insect.

That dagger is the same one she threatened me with when I tried to do something to her in the stables, isn't it?

"O-Oh, sorry, Lynn. Please forgive me."

I placed my head on the table and begged for forgiveness, but their only reply was "Why don't you go borrow from that guy if you don't have enough money?"

"Sorry to keep you waiting, everyone! Oh, who's this?"

A man appeared at the table with a bright smile on his face. I've never seen this guy before.

He's wearing leather armour and has a longsword strapped to his back. He looks like a warrior type.

"This is just a blood sucking insect, there's no need to worry about him. We'll be in your care for today."

"I'm counting on you."

"Don't worry too much, just follow our instructions and it'll be fine."

"Yes, I'll be in your care too!"

Why are they acting so close with that guy? They are treating this man with a naive-looking face as a companion... Wait, don't tell me...

"Wait, don't tell me he..."

"This guy is the guy we had filling in for you after you vanished for two weeks."

Why does it seem like only my bad premonitions end up coming true?

## Part 2

“Dammit, they actually locked me up for two weeks. Not only did I lose the reward from the succubi, but I actually ended up worse than when I started. Nothing good came out of that.”

Leaning into the chair next to the window, I sighed.

“There are people who are happily earning money, and then there are people like me who end up falling deeper into debt no matter how hard they work. This world is so unfair. God dammit.”

My grumblings echoed throughout the store, but no one responded.

Even though both Sir Vanir and Yunyun are here.

Sir seems to be occupied with organizing his store, but Yunyun was just busy building a house of cards by herself.

She’s been glancing at me since a while ago as if she was signalling to me to join her in a game of cards, but it seems like she’s gotten sulky after I ignored her.

“Ah, I really have the worst luck. Is there a kind and generous friend who’d be willing to lend some money to such an unfortunate man?”

“Don’t think that I’ll do anything you say just because you used the word friend.”

“If you aren’t buying anything, please leave. Moi still needs to find a way to deal with this new batch of defective goods that the inept shop owner brought in.”

“Sir, shitty brat, come on, at least show me a little kindness.”

Sir Vanir continued busying himself with his store, and Yunyun concentrated on the highest level of her house of cards.

My companions all left me behind and went on an adventure by themselves. Just who can I spend my time with?

“There’s no need to show any kindness to a man who would call others a shitty brat.”

In response, I grabbed the table and started shaking it.

"P-Please stop! This is about to become my best house of cards yet."

"You wanted me to play with you, right? Very well, how about we start with collapsing this house of cards? I'll go first."

"Ahh! This is why you're so disliked!"

Yunyun screamed as she desperately tried to steady the table. At that moment, Sir Vanir slammed a square box on top of it with a loud smack.

"AAAAAH! My house of cards!"

"Oh, so you were here, she who has reached the zenith of loners. Hey, delinquent adventurer, I'll give you a magic item free of charge if you'll take this girl and leave."

"Oh, you're giving it to me for free? Thanks, as long as it isn't an Axis Cult recruitment form, I'll gladly accept it."

I carefully studied the small box that Sir left on the table, but I had no idea of what it is.

"Sir, what kind of magic item is this box?"

"It's an item that resolves the toilet issues that adventurers face on their journeys. It's a portable toilet that is shrunken through magic. Simply opening the box will activate it. It also provides running water and ambient music to cover the noise of doing business. It's a wonderful item that even women will be able to use without worries."

"Oh, this is a pretty good item! I won't return it even if you ask me to!"

I don't know what came over Sir, but this will be worth quite a bit of money. Female adventurers like Lynn face a lot of issues with attending to business in the wilds, after all.

"I wouldn't say something that petty, though there may be a small problem with it. The sound that it generates is a little loud, loud enough to attract monsters. Furthermore, it can create water, but the water it conjures cannot be controlled, so the surroundings will be flooded when it's used."

“So it’s just a defective product... Yeah, I don’t need it.”

“Hmm, Moi wanted to foist it on you since it couldn’t be returned. Then, what about this?”

Sir picked up the box and replaced it with a large orb.

It’s transparent, and little sparkles can be seen dancing within it.

“Sir, what’s this?”

“It’s a sphere that holds a powerful lightning spell inside. It’s powerful enough to harm even extremely strong magical creatures.”

“True, I do feel a very strong magic from it.”

Having recovered, Yunyun regarded the ball with an impressed gaze. I suppose I can trust the word of a Crimson Demon. Still... something feels off about this.

“And it’s downsides?”

“You’re surprisingly cautious for once. Well, it can only be activated by holding it in both hands, and the lightning isn’t fired in front of it, but drops right to the ground. That’s all.”

“So it can only be used in a suicide attack... I think I’ll pass on this, Sir.”

After returning the ball to Sir, he heaved a deep sigh.

“So you don’t need it, huh. Moi thought that this’d be a good chance to get rid of a few of the unsellable items that the useless storekeeper bought, but that doesn’t seem to be working very well. Bah, no matter, you can come pick it up whenever you want. I’ll provide one to you free of charge.”

To be able to reduce the confident and teasing Sir to such low spirits, the storekeeper must sure be something.

“Nevermind that, listen to this, Sir! My party ignored me and ran off on an adventure with a temporary member! Can you believe that?!”

“So they finally lost their patience for you. You reap what you sow. It’s only natural for a human to react this way.”

“Yeah. Actually, I’m surprised that they were able to put up with you for so long.”

Even Sir and Yunyun are siding with my companions.

“Aren’t friends supposed to stick together through thick and thin? Helping me out when I get into debts, and treating me when they strike it rich, isn’t that what humans should do?”

“You’re the only one who benefits from that. As a devil, Moi might not be the best person to say this, but don’t you think you are a little lacking in humanity?”

“Dust-san talking about how humans should live... It’s less convincing than Megumin declaring that she wouldn’t use Explosion today. Friends are very important, you know!?”

Nevermind not taking my side, Yunyun even started getting ahead of herself and lecturing me with all kinds of nonsense.

It’s like how I get lectured by Lynn and Taylor whenever I run into them. Every single one of you is way too serious.

You’ll just end up wasting your life away by being an inflexible hard head who works themselves to death...

“What’s wrong? Why did you become silent? That kind of listless expression doesn’t suit you.”

“Ah, he does look serious for once.”

“Leave me alone. Tsk, how irritating. I’ll be leaving now.”

A bit of my past came to mind again. I should leave before they start asking questions.

I left my seat and went to the door.

“Delinquent adventurer who’s still haunted by his past, allow the devil who sees all to give you a bit of advice. Don’t let your guard down.”

“A-ah, I don’t really get it, but thanks for the warning, Sir.”

I offered a word of thanks to Sir before leaving the magic item store.

“Did Sir pick up on that? And here I thought I already buried it...”

Sigh... It really isn’t like me to fuss so much over things.

Nevermind the past, what matters now is the present. I need to think about how to get through today.

“I guess there’s no choice but to go make money.”

That means I need to go to the adventurer’s guild and find a good quest.

“What a drag.”

After spending two weeks lazing around and waiting for food to be served, doing anything right now feels like a chore.

Bah, now’s not the time to be saying that. Time to make my way to the guild.

---

“Sup.”

When I boldly stepped into the adventurer’s guild, I could feel the gaze of everyone focusing on me.

All the adventurers in the tavern are looking at me with a shocked expression.

“Hey, come on, why is everyone looking so glum? The great Dust-sama has decided to grace you all with his presence, you know?”

It’s been some time since I came here. I boldly strutted towards the counter.

I overheard a few whispered phrases when I passed by a table with a few adventurers I was familiar with, and deliberately slowed my pace down in order to listen in.

“Hey, Dust’s in one piece.”

“Who the hell said that Dust caught some strange disease and ended up hospitalized?”

“I heard that he got arrested by Prosecutor Sena after he tried to cop a feel on her and got sentenced to a year in prison.”

“Eh? Didn’t he run away in fear after angering Mitsurugi-san? That was what you said before, right?”

“I mean, there’s no way he’d be quiet for two weeks of his own volition, right? All Lynn and the others would say is suggestive things like they don’t want to get involved.”

I came to a complete stop.

So that’s why they were giving me those looks earlier!

“Hey, assholes, don’t just make up strange rumours! I’m perfectly fine!”

I shouted in a voice loud enough to echo around the guild, and they sunk into silence.

“Tsk... If you’re that afraid of pissing me off, then don’t spread strange rumours about me behind my back.”

“Ah, dammit, Dust’s perfectly healthy!”

“And the guild’s been so peaceful these past few days!”

“I had ten thousand Eris riding on Dust not showing up for a month! God dammit!”

The guild suddenly filled with grumblings and shouts.

“You guys were betting on me? You should’ve told me in advance! I would’ve played along for a cut!”

“It really becomes lively whenever you’re around, Dust-san. It has been awhile.”

Luna greeted me with a wry smile as she sat behind the counter.

Her assets are as marvelous as usual. My eyes were irresistibly drawn towards them.

“Oh, they sure are wobbling today.”

“Do you want to be banished from the guild?”

She smoothly replied without her smile fading in the slightest. Yeah, she hasn’t lost her touch.

After dealing with adventurers day in and day out, a little bit of flirting doesn’t phase her at all.

“The guild will suffer a great loss without me, you know?”

“Is that so? We’ve been operating perfectly fine for the past two weeks without you around.”

Hey, aren’t her retorts harsher than usual? She’s smiling, but it feels like they are stinging a lot more today. Though, I don’t recall doing anything to make Luna angry.

“I-I see. Are there any easy quests today?”

I think it’s best to change the topic. After recent events, I’m very well aware of just how scary women can be when angered.

“Hmm, well, spring just broke, so there are a few quests, but... Taylor-san and the others already set out with their temporary member, you know?”

Don’t tilt your head and put your finger on your cheek. You’re long past the age where that kind of stuff is cute... That’s what I wanted to say, but I choked those words back.

If I say anything more, nevermind getting banished from the guild, there’s a decent chance that even my adventurer’s card would get taken away.

“It’d be pretty difficult to go solo, you know? Though, there is an Archmage who’s been making some waves by taking on quests alone recently.”

“Huh, it’s rare to see a mage hack it on their own. Kazuma’s explosion maniac definitely won’t be able to do that.”

“Yes. Normally they would party up with a vanguard and cast magic from the rear.”

To be able to handle quests on their own means that they must be skilled. I’m a little interested in who they might be... Hmm? A mage that works alone... that kind of

reminds me of someone...

I'm a little curious, but right now I need money. Now is not the time to be concerned about other people.

"It's still some time before the cabbage harvest, so that just leaves the giant toads... The giant toads that were hibernating were woken up by the sound of Explosions in winter, so there probably aren't any of them left right now... There haven't been any requests for their extermination either."

"Come to think of it, there was an idiot who was making a din the night I was locked up with Kazuma."

It seems like there was quite a ruckus back then, but I was pretty soundly asleep, so I don't remember much.

The culprit behind that incident was soon identified... well, I say that, but there really only is one suspect behind that incident.

The only two people who can use Explosion in this town are Kazuma's crazy girl and that eternally broke shopkeeper. And it's pretty obvious which one of them would do that kind of thoughtless thing.

"So, the only quests left are a few odd jobs in town. But, well... we can't really entrust odd jobs to you, Dust-san."

Luna avoided looking at me and started fiddling with her fingers... She's hiding something.

"Normally, I wouldn't accept such boring work, but I do need to eat. I'll gladly accept any easy quests that you might have right now."

"You still want an easy quest? Beggars can't be choosers, you know? Rather than that... I think it'd be better to just say it. All the requesters told me not to let you accept their quests."

"Huh? What's up with that?"

"In short, it's just the natural result of your daily behaviour. Everyone's wary of you after seeing you cause nothing but problems in town every day."

“Hey, what the hell does that mean? What have I done?”

All I did was raise a little ruckus after getting drunk. There's no need to make such a big deal out of that.

It's something that anyone would've done. I really want to find the people who spread those kinds of rumours about me and wring some beer money out of them as recompense for the psychological damage I suffered.

“What did you do? Well, let me just read out the list of complaints about you, Dust-san. Peeking at women in the bath, frequent dining and dashing, resisting arrest, property damage, fraud, fighting in the streets, outrage of modesty... There's still more, do you want me to continue?”

“Lets just leave it at that for today.”

I didn't think it was a good idea to continue staying here, so I hurriedly left the guild.

Still, it's really troubling that I can't accept any quests from the guild. This is all because of Lynn and the others leaving me alone to go on an adventure! They better remember this when they get back. I'll take away all the money they get from the quest!

“Ah, I'm hungry.”

My stomach has been grumbling for some time now.

I'll have to find some place to give me free food or loan me money; otherwise, even if I make it through today, it'll be tough to make it through tomorrow.

“Money huh... Speaking of that, don't I have a good friend who has no issues with money?”

He had been struggling with even greater debts than I am, but after getting the money from defeating the Demon King's General, he's been living it up!

“I should go look Kazuma up. If I tell him that there's a store with scantily clad female waitresses, he'll happily visit it with me. Then, with a little flattery... Friends are a great thing to have, aren't they?”

And, even if he refuses, I can still team up with him on an adventure. I can't handle

those three on my own, but there wouldn't be an issue if Kazuma's around.

Kazuma's the only one who can handle those three girls.

Of course, I don't intend to just take from him. I'll lend him a hand if he gets in trouble, and I'll definitely return the money once I get rich. Though it's up to fate if I get rich or not.

"Still, Kazuma's really doing well for himself. Before I knew it, he got himself a mansion and is living together with three beauties. Normally I'd be jealous beyond words, but, living with those three... I wonder how he's holding up."

A wine and party loving Archpriest of the Axis Cult.

An Archmage with nothing but Explosions on her mind.

A masochistic Crusader who can't land any of her attacks.

...Yeah, there's nothing to be envious about.

"Oh, I'm here. It's a splendid looking mansion as always. Kazuma! Are you in!?"

I loudly called on the doorstep, but no one came out. Even after repeating myself three times, there was no response at all. Is everyone out?

"Seriously? Is nobody at home? Crap, what do I do now?"

It really changes things if my lifeline isn't here.

Do I really have no choice but to beg Lynn and the others? Going back to them after saying all that is quite difficult. Even I have my pride, you know?

After weighing my pride and money against each other... money ended up winning slightly.

"I guess I'll apologize when they come back."

I was in the wrong too. I should act like a man and properly apologize.

Kazuma and my companions should be back by tomorrow. I'll just have to secure a

place to sleep and find some food for today.

I went down the back alleys searching for some thugs I could beat up for some money, but, today of all days, I didn't manage to run across anyone.

"Today just isn't my day. The public order in this town is way too good."

Axel is pretty peaceful compared to other places. There are a lot of surprisingly strong people like Sir Vanir and that old man running the stores, and the citizens here are a little more unique compared to the ones in other cities.

Even the adventurers are a quirky bunch... This really is a town you can never get bored of.

"I probably shouldn't have come here."

Now's not the time to let such petty matters get in the way of our friendship. I should hurry up after them and apologize.

Just when I was thinking about returning to the guild and asking about where they went, I heard a voice coming from behind me.

"Dust-san? Is something wrong?"

I turned around and saw Loli Succubus, dressed in that village girl outfit, peeking around the corner.

Did I wander over to the succubus store out of habit?

"Ah, did you come to complain about the one week of free service? Devils put a very high value on contracts, so once a contract is made, it cannot be altered no matter what happens."

I had no idea I'd end up in the cells for two weeks when I made that deal. I can't possibly ask them to give me the week of free service now... no, actually, I really want to say that.

But a contract with a devil is absolute. I guess I should just accept it.

"I wouldn't say such petty things."

Plus, I need to go search for Lynn right now. They are my friends who are partying with me, after all. Obviously they'd be more important. The present is more important than the past.

“Is that so? That doesn’t sound like you, Dust-san. Aren’t you supposed to be overflowing with desires? What happened?”

“Nothing happened. I’m just busy right now. If there’s nothing else, I’ll be leaving.”

The longer I wait, the further away Lynn and the others will get.

“Is that so? Then, I’ll get straight to the point. We are really sorry that your reward for helping us ended up getting voided, so, as compensation, we’re discussing closing the store today and giving you our fullest attentions, but, if you are busy...”

“Who said I was busy?”

“Eh? Didn’t you just say-”

“It’s just your imagination! Hurry up and tell me the details!”

The matter with Lynn still bothers me, but that can wait until they come back. It’s not like they are in immediate danger or anything. Right now, this is more important.

“Are you sure? You seemed to be in a hurry.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ve got free time in spades.”

There might never be another such chance. As if I could let it slip by.

I’m sure my friends will understand. I’m sure of it...

“Then, please come over to our store tonight. We’ll be preparing a meal for you, so please try not to eat dinner before heading over.”

“Roger that, I’ll be looking forward to it.”

Looks like this day just went from the worst to the best.

With this, my food issues are taken care off. All that’s left is wait for night to fall.

Receiving the fullest attentions of the succubi, ah, I can't wait!

Night service will be included, right? Dreams are fun and all, but if I'm surrounded by those sexy onee-chans in reality too... Dammit, hurry up and become night already.

"So... -did it go?"

Did I just hear the voice of a man just now?

I looked around and found myself in an unfamiliar place. Seems like I wandered deep into the back alleys after getting consumed by my imaginations.

"Yes... Seems like he managed to get in."

And that's a different man than before. Seems like it's coming from around that corner.

Ah well, I have nothing to do until night anyways. I can probably observe them to kill some time. I'm really lucky today. If I end up learning of some way to make a load of cash, I'd really be cheering to the heavens.

I quieted my footsteps and crept closer to the source of the voice. Noiselessly drawing my sword, I used its reflection to peek around the corner.

There are two suspicious looking bastards standing there. Judging from their looks, they can't be up to anything good. This entire thing reeks of criminal activity.

"Still, what's wrong with this town? Wasn't this supposed to be a town of newbie adventurers?"

"That's what I've heard, but this place is just full of weirdos. Things just don't work out for us."

"Are they really newbies?"

Thanks to the succubus store, a lot of journeyman and veteran adventurers continue to stay in this town. Well, it's not like I don't understand their feelings.

Still, I feel like I've heard this voice somewhere before.

"Yeah, the kidnapping fell through. I still can't believe the lady of a noble family could

be that sort of person... I wouldn't want to get involved with her even with all that money at stake."

"Someone got in the way too. Even if he didn't appear, I already lost all motivation to go through with it after seeing how she acts."

Hey, aren't these guys the idiots who tried to kidnap Darkness?

Sena said something about a criminal organization infiltrating this town, didn't she?

I think it'd be best not to get involved for now. They know my face, after all. One of these days I'll have to grab my friends and go smash their hideout and grab all their loot, but right now I'm alone.

Plus there's absolutely no way I can miss tonight's events. There's no reason for me to stick my neck into this... Though, I suppose I should inform the police about this.

Just as I was preparing to creep away from the place-

"Her name was Lynn, right? That loli-faced girl in that party he infiltrated."

What did he just say? Did I mishear it, or did he mention Lynn?

"Yeah, that girl with the pretty face is Lynn. It's a party of two men and a girl. One of their party members was indisposed, so he was easily accepted into the party."

"He looks like a proper good guy after all, so it's easy for him to gain the trust of others. Just drug the men and strip them. I don't really care what you do to the guys, but be gentle with the girl. That loli face of hers is very valuable."

"If only she was a little younger. Still, looking younger than her actual age is worth quite a lot of points."

"Having a younger-looking body is more exciting, but I won't ask for too much. Personally, I prefer a girl who's hundreds of years old but still looks like a child."

"A loli hag? Really? Personally, I don't think it counts as a loli unless her personality and mental state lines up with each other."

"That's why you're uncultured. The definition of a loli isn't fixed, you know? You should

broaden your mind to the possibilities of lol. Do you know what gap moe is?

“Gap moe? It has a really good ring to it, but what does it mean?”

I wasn’t able to clearly hear the conversation, but, isn’t this a bit weird? They were talking about kidnapping and stuff awhile ago, right?

It sounds like they regard Lynn quite highly. It’s certainly something I wouldn’t expect to hear from the mouth of criminals.

“If it wasn’t the request of a valued client, I wouldn’t hand her over, but we can’t live without money.”

“Yeah, boss, but we can properly entertain her before we reach the drop off point. It’s like our mission of sorts, after all. Anyway, isn’t it about time to head to the rendezvous point? The others went on ahead of us, but we still need to make some preparations for the ambush.”

Right, there’s no longer any reason for me to let them be.

Taylor and the others really are idiots. That’s why I keep saying that if they look handsome, they must definitely be up to no good.

There’s some strange things mixed in there, but they are unmistakably planning a kidnapping. Now that my friends are in danger, there’s no longer any reason for me to hold back.

“Yeah, it wouldn’t do to be late.”

“Hey, wait up.”

The man who was being called boss earlier turned around at the sound of my voice, and I slammed a fist right into his face.

The other man was slow to react to this development, and I kicked him right in the gut.

“Gurk!”

Yeah, this is how a sneak attack should go.

Now then, leaving aside the guy who's foaming at the mouth for the moment, I need to tie up the guy who seems in charge first. In place of a rope, I used the belt of the guy who seemed to be the underling.

Right, now he won't be able to run away. If I have to tie someone up, it'd be better if it was a woman... Lets leave that aside for now. Time to pump him for the details.

"Wake up already. Hey!"

I lightly kicked the guy in the gut, and he sat up with a gasp.

"Did you have some sweet dreams?"

"What are you doing? What do you want?"

"Can't you tell? Hurry up and cough up your valuables."

The henchman really doesn't have much in his wallet. The only other thing that's worth money would be that dagger. Tsk, how poor can you get? At this point, I might as well strip the clothes from their back and sell them.

"Taking my clothes too? Are you even human?"

The boss seemed to be saying something, but I ignored it.

Right, now that I've gotten what I want, I smashed a glass bottle I found rolling around the back alley on the floor.

Oh, I'll be taking those shoes too. Now even if they run away, I'll be able to catch up easily. That's if they have the guts to run barefoot across broken glass.

"You guys really should learn to save money... No wait, that's not it. Tell me more about what you were talking about earlier."

"I don't know what you are talking about... Why would you want to know anyway? It has nothing to do with you."

So you're playing dumb, huh? What a drag.

There's plenty of ways to make people spill the beans, but time is of the essence, so

let's use the most direct method.

"The people you were planning to ambush sounded like my party members, so unfortunately for you, I can't just let it go."

"Wait, you're talking about that? Not the loli discussion?"

The boss's face paled. He probably just pegged me to be some random adventurer with a strong sense of justice. No one would expect me to be that closely involved.

"Right, now answer my questions. If you lie to me or try anything funny..."

"Tsk, you're not going to say that you'll beat me up, right? An adventurer wouldn't lay a hand on a defenseless opponent, right?"

"I wouldn't do something so barbaric. Though... we could have some fun times with you and that naked underling of yours."

"Eh?"

Judging from the way his jaw dropped, it doesn't seem like he was expecting my response.

"Why don't we start with a passionate kiss between the two of you? Then we'll rub your face into his crotch."

"Hey, stop! You're joking, right?"

"Whether it's a joke or not is up to you."

There's no need to use violence when there's a peaceful way of getting what I want.

With a bright smile, I dragged the naked underling over.

As I lifted him from behind, I met the gaze of the boss who was desperately shaking his head with tears in his eyes.

## Part 3

“This warmth is... This warmth is...”

“You’re pretty stubborn, aren’t you? I didn’t expect you to hold out this far.”

After extracting all the details for him, I wrapped him up together with the underling to show my appreciation.

I hope it doesn’t awaken something strange in you.

Still, to think there’s an organization that kidnaps people in Axel. This is my territory. There’s no need for me to go easy on outsiders.

“Still, I messed up.”

The boss doesn’t know where the rendezvous point is. The one who knew that is the henchman, and he’s completely out of it. No matter what I do, he won’t wake up.

But, there’s a way to learn where they are headed.

I remembered that the Succubus shop was close by. It’s a little out of the way, but I decided to pay it a visit. There’s still some time before nightfall, but I opened the door without reservation.

“Sorry, we’re closed for today... Eh? What are you doing here, Dust-san? We aren’t done preparing yet.”

The only one in the store is a tired looking Loli Succubus.

“I guess you’ll do. There are a couple of men tied up in the back alley. Go tell the police about them. They were the ones who tried to kidnap Darkness some time ago. I’ll be a bit busy from now on, so I’ll leave it in your hands.”

“Eh? Did you do that? What’s the matter? Normally, you’d be boasting about it while proclaiming your dislike for the police.”

“I don’t have time for that. Please handle the rest.”

“W-wait, just what is-”

Without listening to her reply, I headed over to my next destination.

I need to find out where my friends went from the guild.

Without taking any breaks, I ran back to the guild at full pelt.

Just like that, I ran up to Luna who was sitting behind the counter.



“You sure are back early. Did you find someone to party up with?”

“Nevermind that, tell me about the quest that Lynn and the others accepted!”

I don’t have the time to spare on small talk. If I don’t find out where they are and rush over, there’s a chance I wouldn’t make it in time.

“W-What’s wrong? Calm down.”

“Just tell me!”

“Err, Lynn said that you might meddle in their quest out of jealousy, so she told me not to tell you any details.”

“That idiot! Why does she always concern herself with such unnecessary things? I’m begging you, it’s an emergency!”

I clasped my hands together and lowered my head, but Luna seemed too taken aback to answer me.

Trust is the most important thing to guilds. I understand why it might be difficult for Luna to tell me that information. But this is an emergency.

Do I have no choice but to tell the entire story?

“Please tell me the reason you need that information. Otherwise, I won’t be able to reveal that information to you.”

“You know that new guy they teamed up with, right? He’s part of the criminal organization that came into town recently.”

“It... doesn’t seem like you are joking. Please tell me the details.”

After seeing how serious I am, Luna calmed down and looked directly at me.

As expected of a person who’s dealt with plenty of adventurers. She could tell the severity of the situation immediately.

“Hold on a minute. I’m interested in your story too.”

Sena suddenly appeared from behind the counter, adjusting her glasses as she joined the conversation.

“Why is Sena here?”

“I had some business with Luna. Leaving that aside, that criminal organization you were talking about, could it be-?”

“Yeah, we talked about it before, didn’t we?”

“Ah, from back then...”

Seems like she’s remembering the way she was dressed in their store, if her blush is anything to go by.

Usually I would tease her about it, but I’ll pass on that today.

Guess I should tell them about the guys I tied up. It would make it sound more convincing to Sena.

“This is not something we should be discussing here. Luna, can we borrow one of the rooms at the back for a bit?”

“Yes, go ahead. I’ll be joining you.”

As Luna stood up and started moving to the back, I heard a voice calling my name from behind.

“Ah, there you are! Mou, Dust-san! I won’t know where it is if you just tell me ‘the back alley.’ You need to give me more specific directions.”

Turning around, I saw an angry looking Loli Succubus glaring at me through furrowed brows.

## Part 4

“So, basically, the people who once tried to kidnap Darkness have now infiltrated Dust-san’s party. They are planning to ambush them when they are out of the city, rob them and sell Lynn-san to a nobleman. Human trafficking, huh...”

Sena summarized after hearing my explanation.

This room was originally meant for clients to hash things out. In this narrow room, Sena, Luna, and I, and for some reason, Loli Succubus, are currently inside.

“I can’t turn a blind eye after hearing that. Very well, I’ll tell you where they are headed. They’ve accepted a quest to take out a goblin nest that recently sprung up close to Keele’s dungeon. It’s about half a day’s journey from here.”

Keele’s dungeon is that place that newbie adventurers often use as training for dungeon delving. I’ve gone through it many times as well.

It takes about half a day to reach the mountains, and from there you need to follow the animal trails that lead further in to reach the dungeon itself.

“If you leave now, it’d be night by the time you reach the mountains. Heading up the mountain paths at night would be way too dangerous, so you’d have to make camp there and wait till morning before heading deeper in.”

“Yeah, that’s basic knowledge for an adventurer. It’s also written in the manual.”

The manual that Luna mentioned is the guidebook they have in this guild that’s meant for newbie adventurers. It contains detailed explanations and advice that newbie adventurers would find useful.

Most adventurers would’ve gone through it at least once, but I don’t recall ever reading it.

“But the best time to attack Dust’s party would be when they set camp for the night. Especially if they make a move when it’s the infiltrator’s turn to keep watch...”

“They’ll be easily taken care of.”

I continued after Sena trailed off. The logic is sound. If I were in their shoes, that'd be the plan I would go with as well.

"It's been quite some time since they left. Even if we rush after them now, it's doubtful that we'll be able to catch up with them."

"According to the reports I've received, there are at least ten of them. Charging in to face them alone would be reckless."

There's no need for Sena to tell me that. Plus, there's a high chance that there's at least one member in their group who's extremely skilled. I felt his gaze on me during Darkness' attempted kidnapping. I know from experience that anyone capable of directing that much killing intent must be pretty strong.

Right, we'll have to recruit the other adventurers. In such an emergency, I'm sure the guild will cooperate as well.

"Luna, is anyone looking for work right now?"

"Well, about that, most of the adventurers used up their money over the winter, so they are out of the city right now..."

"Dammit. Isn't there anyone left behind? There's got to be a few people lazing around, right?"

"The people who're out on jobs will probably gather around here by evening..."

We definitely won't make it if we wait till then.

I took a look around the guild earlier, but Yunyun just had to be out at this critical time. Even though her only good point is being an awesome mage.

"The police can't send people out based off unverified information. I'm sorry."

Sena bowed and apologized. What an uptight person. The two people I captured are keeping silent, so they only have my testimony to go off on. After having been in their care for so many times, even if Sena believes me, the other members of the police force won't take me on my word.

"Oh, fine, I'll chase after them on my own. If I can catch up with them before they are

attacked, I'll be able to do something. But I'll need some transport. Do you have a horse or a carriage or something?"

Even if I run flat out, there'd be no way I'll be able to catch up with them on foot.

And there isn't a path wide enough for a carriage to run through... in the worst case scenario, I'll have to steal a horse and ride after them. Adding one or two more crimes to my list isn't really going to bother me too much at this point.

"Hold on a moment, I think I might have something."

Loli Succubus, who had stayed silent ever since setting foot into this room, clapped her hands together and said.

If it's an acquaintance of a succubus, could it be possible to get the aid of a high ranked devil?

Could she be referring to Sir Vanir? Sir is a little fickle, so maybe it'd be more effective if a devil would make a request of him. In that case, I'll leave it to her.

I'm a little uneasy to be accepting the aid of Sir Vanir, but now's not the time to be worried about that. If it's something that'll aid me, I'll gladly make use of it.

—

"Why is it this guy?"

After agreeing to meet at the gates, I went around collecting the items I would need for the journey from the general store and the magic item shop, but why the hell is this guy waiting for me at the gates?

I saw Loli Succubus talking with Sir Vanir when I visited the magic item shop, so I thought she was enlisting his aid, but was I mistaken?

"It's been some time, Dust-san."

I'm familiar with this muffled voice.

Or, rather, the impression left by that helmet is way too strong. This is the guy who had the item to circumvent that lie detecting magic item. The helmeted bastard.

"You know, what I wanted was someone who could help in combat. What would I do with the young master of some noble family?"

"Don't worry, I've been trained in the knightly ways since I was a boy. I'm quite confident in my abilities with a spear."

Seeing him wave his spear around, it does seem like he has some skill with it.

A noble who's good with a spear, huh.

"Is something wrong, Dust-san?"

Hey, don't bring your face that close to me.

Even if I'm not attracted to you, I'd still be surprised if you suddenly move so close to me.

"It's nothing. At this point in time, increasing our combat potential by even one person is a good thing."

If worst comes to worst, we can reveal his identity as a nobleman to them and they'll be more inclined to keep him as a hostage than kill him outright.

"Helmet-san quickly agreed to help after I told him about the pinch you were in. His family even prepared horses for you."

"Is it those two horses over there?"

Their manes are glossy, their muscles are well developed, and there don't seem to be any problems with their temperament. Seems like they are raised pretty well. As expected of a nobleman.

"These are two of the horses that my family is taking care of. Do you know how to ride a horse, Dust-san? You can ride behind me if you don't..."

"Nah, there won't be any issues with simply riding one."

It's been some time since I've ridden a horse, but it's not something you easily forget.

"Still, I'm surprised you could contact him so quickly. Do you know where he lives?"

"Ah, err, he just happened to be close by, so I coincidentally ran into him by accident."

"It's a coincidence."

If it's a coincidence, why are you two averting your gaze?

Was he doing something embarrassing? Well, he is a frequent customer of the shop despite being a noble. Maybe he was planning on peeking into the women's baths before Loli Succubus ran into him.

"Don't worry, I won't tell anyone."

I patted him on the back in sympathy, and felt a strange gaze from behind that helmet.

His breathing is as noisy as ever.

"Yeah, I'll do my best to make sure no one finds out."

"S-Sure."

You're getting way too worked up about peeking. Don't get excited and bring your face so close to me. Your panting is annoying.

"Hey, why are you looking at me like that?"

Loli Succubus silently mouthed 'oh dear' and put her hand on her forehead.

Is it because I was encouraging criminal actions? Peeping is a man's romance... though, when I said that to the police, they just threw me into the cells.

"Ah, anyway, let's leave the small talk here. There's no problem with leaving right away, yes?"

"We can set off at any time."

Seems like he's motivated, at least.

I clambered onto my horse, and the helmeted bastard was already up on his horse by the time I got into the saddle.

“I'll be praying for my regular customers to return safely.”

Loli Succubus said as she waved to us from near the gate.

Purposefully mentioning the phrase regular customers, she has the soul of a salesman alright.

“Huh? You're coming along too.”

I grabbed her waving hand and pulled her up without waiting for an answer.

After securing her in front of me, I set off.

“Eh? I-whyyyyy-!?”

Those guys seem to prefer younger women. You'd be perfect as bait.

## Part 5

“Ah, the wind feels good... Oh, there’s a really cute bird over there.”

Loli Succubus happily said as she watched the scenery flow past on horseback.

She was grumbling about it at first, but now she seems really into it.

“That horned rabbit is really cute! The way it hops around is cute too. I really wish I could keep one at the shop.”

“That’s a One Strike Rabbit. It uses those cute movements to lure people like you to let their guard down before stabbing them with its horn.”

“Eh-?”

It’s a monster, after all. By the way, it’s carnivorous.

I felt someone staring at me from behind, and turned around to meet the gaze of the helmeted bastard... I think. I can’t actually see his eyes behind that helmet, but I’ve definitely felt his gaze fixed on me for quite some time.

Yeah, come to think of it, he really helped me a lot in this case. It’s a little late to ask, but why? Lending horses his family owns and agreeing to chase down criminals with me just because we happen to frequent the same store is a little far fetched, isn’t it?

This is the same gaze I felt when we first met. Is there a reason for this?

Let me think about everything that’s happened... Oh, I get it now. He has his eyes set on Loli Succubus! How could I have missed this? That’s why he’s shooting me looks of jealousy.

The reason he readily agreed to help me is because his crush, Loli Succubus, requested him to. It all makes sense if I think of it that way.

Come to think of it, he didn’t even pay attention to the other Succubi in the store. He only gazed upon Loli Succubus who was right besides me. Yeah, I get it now.

“Well, she’s a succubus, after all.”

“Eh? Did you say something?”

She might both look and sound like a kid, but she still is a succubus. Still, is that really okay?

Ah, well, it's not like I really want to comment on the tastes of others.

“Um, I'll get embarrassed if you stare at me like that.”

What's there to be embarrassed about? She wears much more revealing clothing while working at the store. Compared to that, she might as well be dressed like a nun right now. I really don't get what's her criteria for being embarrassed is.

“Dust-san, are we on the right path?”

The helmeted bastard called out after catching up to me.

Yeah, I knew it. He's jealous of me spending so much time talking with Loli Succubus and came to interrupt.

It probably seemed like Loli Succubus and I were hitting it off really well. Yeah, he really does like her.

Well, he did help me a lot back then and right now too. I suppose I can give him some support.

“Yeah, this is the right path. Oh, this horse seems to be getting tired. Maybe it's because he's supporting two riders? Think you can let her ride on your horse for awhile?”

“I'm not that heavy!”

It's really annoying how sensitive women are about their weight and age.

I'm helping you fulfil the desires of a regular customer of yours. Stop arguing and just play along.

“Her? If possible, I'd rather have you...”

“Huh, what was that? I couldn't catch that.”

I couldn't hear him clearly over the wind, but he doesn't seem that into it. I thought he would've been pretty elated over that. Is he hesitating because he isn't used to matters of romance?

I should give him more help in the future. As long as it doesn't require me to cough up money, I'll give him my best help. Who knows, if they end up together, they might remember my efforts and treat me to a drink every now and then.

"I feel a gaze filled with longing upon me..."

"You're imagining it."

"It's erotic, but it doesn't feel quite like it's aimed towards me..."

"Don't worry about it."

Why does it feel like she suddenly shuddered?

And the helmeted bastard has been staring at me all this time. It's starting to scare me. His gaze hasn't wavered for even a second.

I don't quite like the atmosphere right now, but at this rate we'll be able to catch up with them within a few hours.

It would've been best if we knew exactly where they were hiding, but the underling wasn't in a condition to answer questions.

I probably shouldn't have kicked him that hard. Even if anything is broken, a Heal would fix it, right?... If need be, I'll pay for his recovery fees.

"Meeting up with your party is the highest priority right now. Though, what will we do if we run into the criminal organization on the way?"

"Hey, don't say anything strange. I'm pretty sure that's a flag. Kazuma mentioned it to me. Saying those kinds of things make it more likely to come true."

"There's no such thing. Do you really think we'll coincidentally run into that gang here? That's impossible. Ahahaha."

Loli Succubus started laughing innocently.

Every time she talks, I can feel the gaze from that helmeted bastard intensify... What the hell is up with this situation.

"Still, if we are both travelling down the same path, there's a chance we could run into each other."

The helmeted bastard really is a worrywart. You don't need to worry about. Even if we do run into each other, they'd be too busy setting up the ambush to attack us.

"Sure, but there's no need to worry about that. They won't attack us on the way. All of their actions so far have been planned beforehand. They aren't stupid enough to spontaneously waylay a couple of travellers like a bunch of common bandits."

"Dust-san, isn't that a flag..."

You don't need to point that out. Still, there's no way that would happen.

"Stop raising weird flags, you two. Someone just jumped out in front of us."

"Hey, wait, isn't it way too effective?"

They really picked the perfect timing to appear.

There are seven of them, and none of them seem to be good people. A few of them appeared to be adventurers, but they definitely don't have peaceful intentions, if their readied weapons are anything to go by.

Doesn't seem like they intend to negotiate.

I don't feel that killing gaze on me, but there are still quite a few of them to handle. None of them have horses, so maybe we can just charge through? No, two of them have bows.

"Don't say a word, you two. Just follow my lead."

The two of them looked surprised after hearing my words, but they nodded.

Time to show off the skills of the man who's said to be unrivalled in underhanded arts.

"Hey, are you guys the others the boss was talking about?"

Before they could attack, I casually called out to them and waved as I approached.

“Don’t attack us. Sir asked me to bring this girl to you. You guys are gathering loli looking girls, right?”

I patted Loli Succubus on the head. Dressed as she is, she looked nothing more than a young village girl.

Loli Succubus started trembling and acting frightened. Seemed like she understood what I was trying to do.

“Ah... uu... please let me go home...”

She’s good at acting as always. That terrified expression is amazing too. I really made the right choice in bringing her with us.

“Wait, you guys wish to join our group?”

I slowed down my horse and approached the men who’ve let down their guard.

“Yeah. I caught the boss’s eye after doing some thuggish activities in Axel. Since I knew how to ride a horse, he sent me ahead to tell you guys that he might run a little late. This girl is a little present, of sorts.”

“Oh, aren’t you conscientious? We wouldn’t be able to stay in that town after attacking adventurers. Well, increasing the number of lolis we have is nice and all, but... New guy, you don’t get it at all!”

They suddenly became agitated. Did they see through my ruse? My hand is already on the handle of my sword, but it’d still be pretty tough to face this number of people.

“That little girl is crying, isn’t she!? You don’t need to be scared, Ojou-chan. Everything’s going to be fine. Hey, someone bring something sweet over!”

“Roger!”

“Eh?”

We let out a surprised gasp in response to this unexpected development.

The man continued speaking gently to Loli Succubus while the others hurriedly prepared a set of folding table and chairs, before laying out a variety of colourful snacks on top of it.

A soft cushion is placed on the chair, and the table is decorated with flowers.

“Now, come on, please sit over here.”

“Er... okay.”

Loli Succubus pleaded for help with her eyes, but I have no idea what to do.

For the moment, I nodded and watched as Loli Succubus reluctantly got off the horse and moved to the chair.

Seeing the set of freshly brewed tea and snacks in front of her, Loli Succubus seemed to be confused.

These fierce looking men didn't approach Loli Succubus, but instead continued talking to her while maintaining a respectable distance.

“How does it taste?”

“It tastes really good.”

Loli Succubus timidly answered the question of the smiling man.

Two of the other men high-fived after hearing that. I don't understand them at all.

“I am so glad I practised my baking skills... This is the moment I was born for.”

“This is great! I didn't suffer all those hardships for nothing!”

Two of the men teared up and hugged each other. It's a moving sight, but... The hell is going on?

These delicious looking snacks were made by them? You're telling me that this bear like man has a hobby of baking?

The other men nodded at each other and lined up next to the table.

They stood up straight and clicked their heels. It seems like they are about to do something.

They may be weird, but they are still a criminal organization. It'd be dangerous to let my guard down.

“Rule number one! You may admire Lolis, but you must not touch them!”

“You may admire Lolis, but you must not touch them!”

These guys boldly repeated the lines of the leading man.

“Rule number two! Never regard them in a lewd manner!”

“Never regard them in a lewd manner!”

Ah, these guys are Lolicons.

Yeah, these guys are definitely beyond help.

That explains their suspicious behaviour towards Loli Succubus. She looks pretty young, so she's probably right up their alley.

They might be shot in the head, but they have numbers on their side. It'd be best to play along with them and wait for the chance to escape.

Even though I feel like it'd be possible to launch a surprise attack right now, these men seem to be pretty skilled. I can tell from the way they move their center of gravity when they walk. These guys might say some really stupid things, but they aren't pushovers.

“Hey, let's talk about the rest while we eat. We still have something important to handle tonight, right? It's a little early, but we should eat up and get ready.”

“Rule number 13-Yeah, you're right... say, have I seen you before?”

I'm grateful that they stopped their declarations, but he suddenly said something strange.

One of them was staring at my face with a raised eyebrow.

"What a coincidence. I feel like I've seen him somewhere too."

Three of the men said something similar. Are these guys the same ones who tried to kidnap Darkness some time ago? I don't remember it that clearly, but those voices do sound familiar.

This is bad. If they remember where they saw me, everything will be over.

...I'll just have to play dumb.

"Aren't you imagining it? My features aren't all that uncommon, you know?"

"That mop of golden hair... Gurk!"

The man who was about to stumble upon my true identity suddenly received a blow to the head from a spear and fell to the ground.

Needless to say, that's the work of the helmeted bastard.

Before the others realized what was going on, the bastard rode down another guy on horseback. It's pretty impressive, but those guys aren't greenhorns, and the third guy managed to deflect the tip of the spear.

"What the hell are you doing?"

I leapt off my horse and struck at the two men closest to me with my sword, but they managed to narrowly avoid the blow.

"So it was all a ruse! Get them! Ah, but don't touch the loli!"

"Of course!"

All of them closed the distance and brandished their weapons. Two of them are down, that still leaves five. There are three of us, but one of us can't fight. I don't like those odds in a direct confrontation.

Then, there's only one thing to do.

"Right, we're running! Hurry up!"

I leapt back on my horse before grabbing Loli Succubus' outstretched hand and pulling her up.

"Loli kidnapper!"

"Don't put it that way!"

One of the men tried to stab at me with a spear while saying something incomprehensible, but stayed his hand due to Loli Succubus' presence.

Using that chance, we rode out of the group. The helmeted bastard followed after me.

The men frantically tried to ready their bows, but too bad for them.

"Dammit, someone cut the strings!"

"Mine are cut too!"

I wasn't aiming for you earlier, but your bows.

Heh, in terms of deceiving others and running away, I won't lose to anyone!

"Farewell! May we never meet again!"

"Come back here! At least leave the loli behind!"

I could hear the baying of sore losers in the distance, but of course I ignored them.

After putting some distance between us, I slowed down my horse and pulled up next to the helmeted bastard.

"Looks like we made a clean escape."

"Those men were completely fooled. You were really splendid out there."

"You really are first class when it comes to cheating others."

“Yeah, well, this is just what happens when you leave things to me.”

I don't know if they'll wait for their two companions to regain consciousness before moving on or leave them behind. Either way, there's no chance they'll be able to catch up to us while we are on horseback.

“All that's left is to find Dust-san's companions, right?”

“Eh? What are you saying? We're setting a trap and ambushing them.”

“Huh?”

This isn't something to be surprised about. I couldn't see the face of the helmeted bastard, so I couldn't tell his reaction.

“Don't act so surprised. We know that we have better mobility than them, so there's no longer any reason to panic. Finding my companions would be great, but if we can't find them, then all we would've accomplished is waste our time. Rather than trying to find out where the ambush spot is, it'd be easier to just take them out right here.”

“Well, sure, but didn't we just run away from them?”

“That's precisely why we are doing this. They wouldn't expect people who just ran away from them to turn around and ambush them. And they'll be too busy trying to catch up to us to bother looking for signs of an ambush. Even an obvious trap will work on them.”

If we manage to meet up with our companions first, all their plans would be wasted. They must be in a right panic at the moment. Though if they were to just give up and abandon the plan, that'd be fine too.

“But, what will we do about the materials required to set a trap?”

“We are surrounded by the bounties of nature, aren't we? Being prepared and gathering information is essential for adventurers. If a direct attack doesn't work, then use your brains and set a trap for them. The items I have in this bag will be very useful for this purpose.”

“Dust-san... Have you ever considered changing your job to a thief?”

“I refuse. Stop talking about useless things and help me set up. We don’t have much time left. Hurry up and get to work!”

“It feels really weird to have Dust-san chastise me about working.”

What are you saying? Stop spending your time on idle chatter and take a page or two out from helmeted bastard’s book.

He’s already tied the horses in a safe place and is waiting for my orders. If this goes well, I’ll definitely do my best to set the two of you together.

“Come on, hurry up and move.”

## Part 6

The traps have been set, and we've come up with the perfect battle plan.

Everyone's in position. All that's left is to wait for them to appear.

It's kind of hard to hate those guys, but they are still planning on kidnapping one of my friends and turning her over to some nobleman.

Regardless of their reasons, I have no intention of forgiving anyone who would harm one of my companions.

The point I've chosen for my ambush is a small animal's trail just ahead of Keele's dungeon. It's a narrow path that slopes up the mountain.

This path is narrow enough that it can at most accommodate two people standing side by side, and it's surrounded by tall grasses and steep slopes on both sides.

The terrain is very advantageous for us.

The sound of footsteps reached my ears from further down the path, and they steadily grew louder.

I peeked out from behind the grass that had become my hiding place

There are seven men, completely covered in sweat.

There are no forks in the road, and there is no reason for them to walk along the tall grasses or steep slopes on either side of the path. Right, everything is going just as planned.

"Hurry up! There's no telling what boss will do to us if we mess this up! I might even lose several items from my secret collection!"

"I wouldn't want to live without my Iris-sama album."

"I have a few things that the boss has his eye on too. Dammit, why is this road so muddy!? Even though we're in a hurry!"

They seemed pretty worked up about it, but the boss they are talking about is probably enjoying the hospitality of the detention cells right about now.

Just as they started climbing up the slope, the helmeted bastard appeared on the road in front of them, his body dripping with water.

He stood as if to block the path, and motioned towards them.

"You're-the guy from before! You're pretty brave to face us alone. Where are the other two- Hey, what are you doing? Ow!"

Helmeted bastard ignored their words and started throwing the large stones that we've gathered in advance at them.

"Hey, cut it out! Are you a kid!? Ow! Stop throwing stones at us! It hurts! If you're going to throw stones, I'd rather you switch with that loli from earlier. A young girl throwing stones with all her might... yeah, that's moe! Ah!"

He ate a rock directly to the face. Rocks have low killing power, but getting hit by one hurts quite a bit. It might even end up breaking a few bones if it hit the right spot.

They are all clumped up on this narrow path, and after losing their bows, they have no way of retaliating. All they can do is take these attacks being thrown at them from up high. It really is quite amusing.

"Gwahahaha! Quite a nice look you have down there!"

I stood up from my hiding place at the top of the slope and let out a hearty laugh.

Partly it's to provoke them, but it's mostly because I genuinely found it hilarious.

"Don't you dare laugh at us!"

"Two of you, go around and flank him. And you guys go take care of that laughing fool. The rest will charge right at this guy with me."

Hmm, sending two guys down the slope to flank the helmeted bastard, three guys to climb up after me, while the rest charge straight ahead while shielding their faces with an axe. Well, the slope is not exactly insurmountable, but...

“Uwah! What the!? Did it rain recently? This grass is too slippery to get a firm grip on!”

“Gwah! I just tripped on something!”

I let out another hearty laugh after seeing them slip on the wet ground and get tripped up by the ropes we wove together out of grass earlier.

“Hey, are you alright? Keep at it, you’ll be walking on two feet in no time!”

“Stop fucking with me! We like young girls, but that doesn’t mean we enjoy getting treated like children!”

The more agitated they get, the tougher it is for them to find their footing. In the end, they are simply fumbling all around the place without making a shred of progress.

Oh, I should give them some stones to encourage them.

The stone I flung hit the guy in the lead square on the forehead, and he ended up dragging down the guy behind him as he fell, ending up in a ball of flailing limbs and faces.

“Oh, forget him! Just cover your faces and charge right through!”

Oh, now you’re planning on ignoring me and simply following the road. Yeah, that’ll be the wiser course of action. The stones will be easily fended off with just a bit of protection, after all.

But did you really think the great Dust-sama wouldn’t anticipate that?

“Looks like they are clumped up together. I’ll leave the rest to you.”

“Leave it to me~”

In response to my signal, Loli Succubus flew out from her hiding spot in the trees.

Instead of the village girl outfit, she’s wearing far more revealing clothing, allowing her bat wings to poke out from her back and keep her aloft in mid air.

“What? That girl was an angel?”

Come on, no matter how you slice it, those are the wings of a devil.

With the lightning sphere firmly grasped in her hands, Loli Succubus flew to just above the crowd that stood still in shock.

“Now then, Lightning Strike!”

The lightning bolt dropped below the sphere onto the crowd, and quickly spread through the wet ground after striking the first person. Every single one of them fell to the ground in a heap.

It was more powerful than I expected. I could smell something burning. They aren't dead, I hope.

“This magic item is amazing!”

Loli Succubus excitedly exclaimed after landing. Well, she's a devil who can fly under her own power. For humans who are stuck to the ground, that's just a really expensive way to commit suicide.

“That magic item that flooded the ground is also pretty amazing, isn't it? It's a pity we had to break it to keep it from making that awful noise.”

I used that portable toilet from the magic item shop to flood the area.

It sprayed water all over the place after the helmeted bastard smashed it to prevent it from attracting monsters. Well, at least some good came out of it.

“So, what should we do with them?”

“Strip them of their clothes and weapons and tie them up by that tree. We can deal with them after we meet up with Lynn and the others. The only one left is the guy who infiltrated the party, but don't let your guard down.”

“Alright. Then, let's strip them quickly.”

“Sure thing, I'll help too~”

Well, I guess a succubus wouldn't be squeamish about stripping a man down.

The helmeted bastard seems to be pretty adept at this too. He only stumbled a little when removing their armour.

I helped, of course. After removing their clothes and weapons, we lined them up against a tree before tying them to it with rope.

“That took more time than I expected. It’s already getting dark. Let’s hurry on.”

Getting back on our horses, we rode down the path that has mostly dried by now.

We rode them until we came to a narrow animal trail that the horses couldn’t traverse, so we had to part ways.

“Can you wait here for awhile? If we don’t come back, you can head back first.”

I silently watched the helmeted bastard as he whispered to the horses.

I don’t believe that horses can understand human speech perfectly, but the smarter ones are able to understand simple words and the feelings of their masters.

It’s been some time, but getting back on a horse again isn’t too bad.

“Dust-san, you had a really gentle expression on your face just now.”

“I’m always gentle.”

“...Yes, of course.”

Loli Succubus averted her gaze and said in a monotone voice.

“If you have something to say, say it to my face.”

Don’t just whistle and play dumb.

“Thanks for waiting. Let’s go.”

After the helmeted bastard rejoined us, we hurried down the animal trail.

I don’t think it’d be likely for him to get up to anything on his own, but he is a criminal, after all. Who knows how he thinks? They seem to be a reasonable bunch and don’t

seem to mean Lynn any harm, but there's bound to be one or two people in the group who think differently from the majority.

If he does anything to harm Lynn or my friends... I don't think I'll be able to restrain myself.

No, it'll be fine. I'm sure of it.

## Part 7

“Ha, what a bunch of fools. Hahaha!”

Looking at those three sleeping with their mouths wide open, I let out a satisfied laugh.

Normally, it would only be natural to have the new guy be in charge of night watch, but these guys got worried for me when I forcibly volunteered myself. They really are a bunch of bleeding hearts.

After waking me up, they didn’t even suspect anything and went right to bed.

I threw a pouch of sleeping powder into the bonfire, and this is the result.

It’s a pretty powerful sleeping drug, so no matter how noisy the surroundings are, they won’t wake up.

“There’s still about two hours left till the meeting time.”

Normally I would wait a little while longer before using the drug, but I purposefully used it way in advance today.

I gazed at the mage named Lynn as she slept.

I don’t know her exact age, but she’s probably still in her teens. With that child-like face of hers, the client will definitely be pleased.

Men generally prefer women who are bountiful in both chest and buttocks, but there are some who prefer more slender women.

Most people wouldn’t understand this, but the band I’m part of is comprised entirely of men who are fascinated by the appeal of slender... no, young looking girls.

I knew that she was my type from the moment I laid my eyes on her. There are some who prefer even younger girls, but for me, someone like her is the best.

“She looks like a kid, but she adopts such a strong exterior every day. That’s really great. To think that I’d be able to do anything I want to a girl like her... oh, no, I think I just drooled a little.”

It's a rule that we shouldn't lay a hand on the girls we fancy, but there won't be a problem as long as nobody finds out. I'm the one who takes care of the most troublesome role, after all. I deserve a few perks.

"First I'll remove the cloak. Should I remove the top or the bottom next? I'll leave her shoes and socks on, of course."

There's a specific order in which you need to remove the clothes. Rather than stripping them completely nude, having a few pieces of clothing on is much more erotic, at least, that's my personal philosophy. So, I'll remove her top but leave her bra on.

Then I'll remove her bottom but keep her panties on. Yeah, that's what I'm talking about!

Her underdeveloped breasts and hips being hidden by her bra and panties! And the added sexiness that leaving her shoes on provides!

"This is the best! Now, then, let me thoroughly enjoy that smooth skin of yours."

I slid my index finger along her body.

Her modestly sized chest under the fabric. That smooth and bouncy skin of hers... I can't get enough of this. Now, let me enjoy myself a little more.

Her breasts are minuscule, but if I forcefully grab her chest, I'll be able to feel it with my entire palm. I closed my eyes and focused all my attentions on my hand.

"Eh? Isn't it a bit bigger than I expected? Did she always have such large breasts?"

It's large enough that it's spilling through my palm. Was she hiding such a huge chest underneath her bra?

Well, that wouldn't be too bad, but it's not exactly what I was hoping for. To have such a massive difference from its appearance... the bodies of women sure are mysterious.

I opened my eyes to confirm the situation- and saw a blushing red pig in front of me.

"HA!? What is an orc doing here!?"

What I was touching wasn't Lynn's chest, but an orc's?

What the hell is going on?

“Ara, you are a forceful one. Well, I don’t dislike that.”

The orc breathed heavily and fixed me with an intense gaze.

I felt a chill flow down my spine.

“M-M-M-M-M-”

I was too shocked to speak properly.

“M? You want to get married? Aren’t you a hasty one? First, let’s start with confirming our compatibility first.”

“Eeek!”

I frantically backpedaled away from the orc.

I-I need to escape. Orcs are a female only race that men need to cautiously take down from afar. They are the worst kind of enemy a man could face.

I’ve heard more than enough tales of the kind of fate that awaits men who’ve been captured by orcs.

No matter how unsightly I look, I need to put as much distance between me and her as I can.

Being too afraid to stand, I pedaled backwards with my ass still firmly on the ground, and felt my back hit something.

“Ara, Onii-san, where are you going?”

Y-You’re kidding, right? This voice is...

My instincts are screaming at me not to turn back, but I just couldn’t stop myself.

Yeah, I could’ve just imagined it. I could’ve just hit some kind of obstacle and imagined the voice.

I slowly turned my head around... What I ran into wasn't a rock or a tree, but the body of a musclebound orc.

And there were three of them.

"EEEK!"

"Let's enjoy ourselves! I won't let you sleep tonight! *Pant Pant*"

"I'm in heat today! Let's get rid of those bothersome clothes~!"

"No! No! Stop! Don't be so rough!"

"I want at least 50 children, so work hard, papa! First, we should share a passionate kiss so that we have something to tell our children!"

"T-There's no need for that."

I tried to escape, but the first orc grabbed my shoulder with an iron grip.

Her drooling mouth is slowly moving closer to me...

"S-Somebody! Save me!!"

—

A man is tossing and turning in his sleep before me.

Sitting next to him, Loli Succubus had her hand on his forehead, giving him some sweet dreams.

"I only gave some direction for the dream, but it seems like it's really working out quite well."

It seems like this man who deceived my companions and wanted to lay a hand on Lynn has encountered something unthinkable in his dream.

He's frantically shaking his head as if he's resisting something.

"Hehe, I could enjoy this."

Loli Succubus' smile is really scary. This won't awaken something strange in him, will it?... I should treat her better from now on. There's no way I can fight back if I were held hostage in my dreams, after all.

"I didn't expect him to be a member of a criminal organization. This is what they mean by you can't judge a book by its cover."

Lynn said with a serious expression on her face.

We stealthily met up with them while this guy was still sleeping. They were surprised at first, but they accepted it after I explained the situation to them.

Well, they didn't believe me, but they certainly believed it when Loli Succubus and the helmeted bastard explained it. Some companions they turned out to be.

"Dust, you saved us. Thanks."

"You certainly changed my view of you. You really do pull through when it counts."

Keith and Taylor properly gave their thanks to me.

As for Lynn, she stared at me with her arms crossed.

"Hey, Lynn-san, isn't there something you should say to me?"

"Y-Yeah, well, yeah, thanks for saving us!"

She shouted that at me, but I knew it was just to cover her embarrassment.

That's why I-

"Yeah, show me your appreciation."

Replied with a wide smile.

## Part 8

It's already quite late today, so we decided to spend the night here and head back tomorrow.

Everyone's already soundly asleep.

I lost in a game of rock, paper, scissors, so I ended up stuck with night watch at this time.

Originally Lynn was supposed to keep watch together with me, but I didn't wake her, instead staring at the bonfire all by my lonesome.

My companions, Loli Succubus and the helmeted bastard were both sound asleep. Though, since the bastard kept his helmet on even when sleeping, I can't really tell how soundly he's sleeping.

The man who had his spirit broken after experiencing the orc paradise was tied up with rope and lay collapsed on the floor.

The only one awake in this place is me... and someone else.

I stood up and dusted the dirt off my backside.

"I'll be borrowing this."

I picked up the spear lying next to the helmeted bastard.

Walking past a large, slanted tree, I headed off deeper into the darkness.

As I reached a clearing, I narrowed my eyes.

"Right here is fine, isn't it? I didn't want to wake the rest of them up, so I brought you out here. Come on out."

"Oh, so you noticed me. I thought you were just going out to water the grass."

A man dressed in black from head to toe stepped out from the shadows. Dressed as he is, he blended perfectly into the darkness.

I could faintly feel his gaze on me ever since I started setting up the traps for the ambush. He's been following me all the way since then.

Just from his presence and his attire, I can tell that he's a dangerous man. He's on a completely different level than the other thugs. Is he an actual assassin?

The warning that Sir Vanir gave me is definitely referring to this man.

"Anyone would notice if you give out so much killing intent. I don't know who you are, but you're probably hired by those guys, right? The boss is already chilling in the cells. Are you sure you want to go through with this?"

"They've hired me and paid in advance. No matter what happens, I must ensure the safe delivery of goods."

"You really are inflexible for a guy in this line of work. You're going to waste your life away if you're this hard headed... Just like I did in the past."

"Thank you for your advice. Let's leave the small talk here and get to work."

Facing a motivated opponent, I stared at my spear and tightened my grip on it.

I swore off using spears a long time ago, but it seems like my body still remembers how to use them.

"If it's to protect something important... You'll forgive me, right?"

Her face flashed into my mind. The face of that free spirited woman with a face way too similar to Lynn's.

I placed a hand on the sword I received as a parting gift from her, and sighed.

-I'll use a spear.

I bent my knees slightly and assumed a combat stance.



The black clad man slid towards me with extremely light steps.

He held a dagger in each hand. A dual wielder, huh?

I thrust my spear at the approaching man, but he narrowly dodged it and leapt right at me.

Two flashes of silver gleamed under the moonlight. They were headed straight for my neck.

I leaned backwards to avoid the blades, and turned it into a backflip in order to gain some distance.

I thrust my spear at the man just before I landed, and he threw himself backwards to avoid it.

“You’re pretty skilled. I’ve been observing you for some time now. Was that all an act?”

“Not at all. If anything, this might be the true act.”

I jested without taking my eyes off him.

“However, I’ve already grasped your combat style with that exchange. I’ll end it with the next blow.”

The man confidently declared, before stepping forward. Before his feet touched the ground, I twisted around and thrust at him with the butt of my spear.

It was a serious thrust. It burst through the air and caught him right in the stomach.

The black cloaked man widened his eyes in surprise, glanced down at the spear stuck in his body, and silently collapsed to the ground.

“My bad. It’s been a while since I’ve used this, so I can’t really hold back right now.”

# Epilogue

“-I didn’t earn a single eris, and my free service went up in smoke too. *Sigh...*”

In the end, I didn’t reap any rewards from this.

Those fellows have attempted kidnapping several times before, but they always end up releasing their victims in less than a day. The kidnapped girls weren’t harmed, and were in fact treated like princesses, so those cases were never reported.

On top of that, it seems like they had the backing of a powerful aristocrat, so the police have no intention of going public with this incident. Of course, that means there’s no bounty for turning them in either.

And the assassin like guy that they hired ended up disappearing somewhere along the way... Well, as long as we never meet again, I guess it doesn’t matter. That kind of inflexible person will probably see our confrontation as a fulfilment of his duty, so he shouldn’t come after me.

It’s good to see that my friends are unharmed, but the only one who suffered any kind of loss was me.

“And here I thought you were a better person... You really are hopeless, aren’t you?”

Lynn said in response to my grumbling as we sat at our usual places at the guild. She sounded exasperated, but it doesn’t seem like she means it. Actually, I think I spotted a faint smile on her face.

“I’m thankful to you, Dust, but I should properly offer my thanks to the other two who were there.”

Taylor really is the model of a gentleman. That said, it’ll only create problems if I were to introduce them to him. After all, one of them is a noble, and the other one is a succubus.

“I know the girl, but who’s the guy in the helmet, Dust?”

As a regular of the store like me, Keith is obviously aware of the true identity of Loli Succubus. As for the helmeted bastard... I suppose I can tell him when we are in private.

“I’ll tell you sometime later.”

“Still, that cute girl is really amazing. I’ve never even heard of a spell that can control dreams. I wonder if she will teach me next time?”

Speaking of which, I made that sound like a special spell that only Loli Succubus could use, didn’t I? Lynn must never know her true identity. Only bad things lie down that path.

“Oh, how about letting her join our party? I’ll be happy with another girl to talk to, and you are on good terms with her, right?”

“Wait, that’s...”

If we do that, her identity will definitely be exposed. We need to cut this off immediately.

“That’s not a bad idea. Though, how did you get to know such a cute girl in the first place, Dust? You aren’t blackmailing her or anything, are you?”

“Of course not! It’s just, her workplace had an issue with a few thugs once, so I helped her resolve things, that’s all.”

“You’re pretty useful when it comes to problems of that nature, huh?”

They seemed convinced by that, but for some reason, I don’t really feel good about it. Still, it’s not that big of a deal. Just bear with it.

“Nevermind that, let’s go pick up a quest before I actually commit some kind of crime...”

“You’re joking, but it’s scary how believable it is...”

Of course it’s a joke... well, mostly.

My current net worth is negative. If I don’t find a way to deal with it soon...

“Ah, if you have money issues, use this.”

Taylor slammed a full bag onto the table.

Is this full of money?

“What are you planning?”

“You beg for money every day, but the moment I actually give you money, you become suspicious? This is recompense from the guild. It’s an apology for accidentally introducing a criminal into our party.”

Taylor jabbed his thumb over to the counter, and Luna offered us a deep bow upon meeting our gaze.

“It’s supposed to be split up amongst us, but we’ll give it all to you. You did save our lives, after all.”

“I may not look like it, but I am thankful for that.”

“Well, that’s how it is.”

Seriously, this party sure can’t be honest. It’d be really cool for me to reject this money, but my personal philosophy is not to refuse anything given to me.

“Thanks. Looks like there’d still be some money left even after I repaid my debts, so let’s have a toast!”

“What happened to all that talk about quests? Seriously, what am I going to do with you? I’ll join you for today.”

“Sounds good, let’s drink till we drop!”

“Sure. It’d make a good celebration for our reunion, so let’s drink!”

Yeah, this is how friends should be.

Sharing both joy and hardships is what friends ought to do.

“Alright, we’re drinking till we drop! Bring out the beer!”

“Seems like you made quite a bit of money. How about repaying what you owe Moi?”

A white gloved hand grasped the hand I was using to wave over the waitress.

Who the hell is it that dares to get in the way just when things are going well?

I looked up and saw a familiar face.

“Oh, Sir Vanir. Are you here to work again?”

The consultation corner he ran in the guild was a big hit. Is he here to set up shop again?

“That was the plan, but that won’t be necessary now. Now then, Moi’ll be taking the money for the magic item.”

“Eh, what are you talking about? Didn’t you say you’ll give them to me for free?”

“I believe I said I’ll give you one magic item for free.”

Sir Vanir took the bag of gold and left a “Fuhahaha! Your dark emotions are pretty delicious!” before leaving the guild.

I completely forgot about it... Yeah, he did say he’ll give me one magic item free of charge, right?

“My drinking money...”

I was too shocked to even try to stop Sir from leaving.

I blankly gazed at my companions, and all of them patted me on the back in sympathy.

“Let’s go accept a quest.”

Don’t you all say that at the same time.

“Ah, god dammit! Why is it that money always ends up leaving me?!?”

“Money just doesn’t like you, it seems. Come on, let’s go pick a quest. We’ll go with you. We are friends, after all.”

Lynn said, blushing slightly. Behind her, both Keith and Taylor nodded.

Oh fine, guess I'll have to work for my money today.

"Ah, right! Sir took away all of my money, so I won't be able to pay back the debts I have due today! Let's hurry up, accept a quest and get far away from the city!"

After quickly accepting a quest, we left the guild to be greeted by a bright, cloudless sky.

The voices of the store owners trying to attract customers could be heard as well.

The familiar faces of adventurers heading out of the city.

The policemen who immediately perked up upon seeing my face.

"The day is so clear that it's starting to piss me off."

"Don't vent your anger on the weather. *Sigh...* and you were so cool on that night..."

I whipped my head around upon hearing Lynn's whispered words.

Seeing her give me a wide and impish smile, I felt my heart skip a beat.

"You were awake back then?"

"Well, who knows?"

After giving me a vague answer, Lynn happily skipped ahead.

Taylor, and Keith traded looks, shrugged, and chased after her.

Seems like it'll be another rowdy and interesting day today.

Done by CGtranslations @www.CGTranslations.me

# Afterword

Hello everyone, I'm the author of "A time in the limelight for this fool too!", Hirukuma.

Most of the people who picked up this book will most likely be fans of Konosuba, so you might be asking yourself, "Who the hell is Hirukuma?" I'm a fledgling author who wrote "Reborn as a Vending Machine, I Now Wander the Dungeon." that debuted in Sneaker Bunko about a year ago.

At the start of this year, my manager Mr M asked me "Hey, do you want to try your hand at writing a Konosuba Spinoff?" As a fan of the Konosuba series from back when it was a Web Novel, I instantly went "Really? Yes, please!", but after the phone call ended and I regained my senses... The pressure of "I just agreed to something really big" finally crept up on me.

I'll be in charge of the spinoff of a big name, extremely popular work. Despite being somewhat afraid of that, I ended up writing this book as a fan. This is just my opinion, but one must, at minimum, like the original work in order to write a proper spinoff for it. I can proudly say that I meet that minimum requirement. I'm a big fan after all.

If I approach this from the perspective of a fan, not only as an author writing a book for a job, wouldn't that result in an extremely interesting work? Not only using the world and characters of Konosuba to make my original characters shine, but also to take a deeper look at the situations that happen behind the scenes of the original story. That's my hope as a fan.

There are a lot of people I need to thank in writing this work.

First off, there's Akatsuki Natsume-sensei. Thank you very much for letting me write a spinoff to Konosuba, a work filled to the brim with wonderful characters. If I were to put to words all my feelings of gratitude and appreciation here, it will probably end up being over ten pages long, so I'll have to properly express my gratitude at some other time.

Just looking at Mishima Kurone-san's character illustrations fills my head with ideas,

and it's all thanks to her that I can make Dust and the others run rampant in an entertaining manner.

Yuuki Hagure, who is in charge of all the beautiful illustrations in this book. Thank you for drawing all these wonderful pictures. Darkness-san is really nice...

Everyone involved in the production of the anime. When I was writing, the characters were always bouncing around in my head, and I could never forget the voices of the characters provided by the Seiyuu.

Everyone in the editorial department. Mr M whom I exchanged opinions with on numerous occasions, and everyone involved in the publishing of this book.

Lastly, thanks to everyone who picked up this book!

Hirukuma

**THANK YOU FOR PURCHASING THIS BOOK! AS A FAN OF KONOSUBA, I WORKED HARD WITH THE IDEA OF "IT'D BE GREAT IF I COULD BRING A LITTLE BIT OF HAPPINESS TO OTHER FANS." IN MIND.**

**ALSO, I'M CURIOUS IF LOLI SUCCUBUS HAS A NAME OR NICKNAME OR SOMETHING.**

**YUUKI HAGURE**



**CONGRATULATIONS ON THE RELEASE OF THE DUST SPINOFF. READING DUST WRITTEN BY SOMEONE ELSE FEELS A LITTLE STRANGE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO HIRUKUMA-SENSEI RELEASING NEW WORKS, SO ONCE AGAIN, BLESSINGS UPON THE RELEASE OF "A TIME IN THE LIMELIGHT FOR THIS FOOL TOO!"**

**AKATSUKI NATSUME**

**DUST-SAN'S SPINOFF! CONGRATULATIONS ON THE RELEASE!! I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO READ DUST'S CIRCUMSTANCES (?) THAT I WAS ALWAYS CURIOUS ABOUT. SO EVEN I WAS GLUED TO THE PAGES. AND BEING ABLE TO SEE HAGURE-SENSEI'S DARKNESS AND EVERYONE ELSE...! REALLY, THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HARD WORK!!**

**MISHIMA KURONE**



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*Well, this is the final Chapter of the first Dust spinoff. I hope you guys enjoyed reading it, I certainly did. It reminded me a lot of the earlier volumes back when Kazuma was still wallowing in poverty, and thus most of what made me fall in love with the series in the first place.*

*Also, Loli Succubus is cute.*

*Anyway, I'll be taking a two week break to put the finishing touches upon Volume 13. Yes, I know a lot of you folks have been waiting for it. Don't worry, it won't be long now. There are still three short stories included in the Dust spinoff, which will be going up over the next week, but other than that, the next proper update should be on 6th April, with the Volume 13 prologue (A challenge to this Lich!).*

*See you guys then.*

# Short story

## Observing Aqua

When I was in the adventurer's guild, checking if there are any easy yet profitable quests like I usually do, I received a strange, "off the record" request from Kazuma. It seems like the guild regard him as the caretaker of his party, of sorts, so they've been making him clean up after their messes.

And so, Kazuma wanted me to investigate exactly what his comrades get up to when he's not around.

It's a request from a close friend whom I owe a lot to, and what's more, he even promised me an adequate reward, so I had no reason to refuse.

In that case... Let's investigate that Archpriest Aqua today.

The next day, I was waiting in front of Kazuma's mansion for her to come out, but even after waiting till afternoon, it didn't seem like anyone was going to exit.

"The explosion girl and Lalatina left, but no one else is coming out of the mansion. Kazuma's inside too. What the hell are they doing? Hey, wait, don't tell me..."

When a boy and a girl are alone inside a house, it's obvious what they'll get up too.

It's not like I'm envious of Kazuma, nor do I wish to peek in on an erotic scene.

I'll just take a little peek to fulfil the request to watch over her for a day.

I quietly entered the garden and approached a window with a view of the spacious room where the fireplace is.

Thankfully, the window was slightly open, and I peeked inside through that gap.

"What's that?"

I was greeted by the sight of Kazuma's face, peeking from a strange object that looked like a combination of a futon and a desk.

A blue-haired head could be seen on the other end. That must be Aqua.

"Come on, scoot over there a little more. It's too cramped here."

"I don't want too. Just get out. Don't you prefer to sit in front of the fireplace rather than under the kotatsu?"

"Yes, but... Firewood eventually burns out, and with Megumin and Darkness gone, there is no one to replenish it. Oh, Kazuma, why don't you do it instead?"

"I refuse. I have no intention of leaving the kotatsu! I'll say it now, I'd rather spend my entire day lazing around here than move for you!"

"You haven't changed at all! What would you do with yourself if you're still a hiki-NEET even after coming to another world? Come on, work hard for the sake of a Goddess."

"Who are you calling a hiki-NEET!? Anyway, didn't you say that you have an errand to run today? It's already past noon."

"Ah? Why didn't you say it sooner!? My precious believers are waiting for me!"

She hurriedly jumped out of the heater thing they called "kotatsu".

I was planning to just head home if they were to stay inside all day... Oh, well. I followed after Aqua as she left the mansion.

She was humming a song as she headed out to...

"Hey, wait, isn't this the meeting spot for the Axis Cult?"

Aqua happily walked into the church of the infamous, trouble-making Axis Cult.

"How's everyone doing!?"

"Oh, if it isn't Aqua-sama? Please, come this way. The tea and snacks will be here momentarily."

“What should we do today? How about scribbling “Eris pads her chest” on the side of the Eris Church? What do you think?”

Why are the believers welcoming such a troublesome priest so warmly?

She's even leaning back into her chair with a smile.

She's being doted upon in much the same way that grandparents might dote on their grandchildren. I know that Archpriests are highly respected, but even so, isn't this treatment a little odd?

“There might be something deeper to this... Bah, I don't really care. I don't really care to understand the thought process of the Axis cult.”

Afterwards, they were discovered just as they were about to scribble on the wall of the Eris church, and ended up running away from both the Eris Cultists and the police.

I wondered why exactly I was doing this for a moment, before I remembered the reward that Kazuma promised me and resumed tailing her.

After parting ways with the Axis Cultists, she wandered over to the magic item shop that Sir Vanir was working at to sip tea and pick a fight.

Aqua seems to be on bad terms with Sir Vanir, but despite causing so much trouble for the shopkeeper, she seems happy to have Aqua around.

Come to think of it, I think I've heard that Yunyun frequently comes to this shop.

As the sun started setting, dying the town red, Aqua got up from her seat.

“It's already this late. Right, I'll head back then.”

“Please come again, Aqua-sama.”

“Don't ever come back! It's because you spoil her that she keeps coming back!”

Ignoring the curses flung at her from behind her back, Aqua hurried back home.

“I'm home~! What's for dinner today? I'm starving!”

After returning home, she energetically said that to her party and settled herself into her spot at the dining table.

There's no need for me to watch over her any longer.

The only thing I gleaned from following her around all day is-

"She's a girl who simply follows her own desires."

And that's all there is to it.

# Short story

## Observing Megumin

When I was in the adventurer's guild, checking if there are any easy yet profitable quests like I usually do, I received a strange, "off the record" request from Kazuma. It seems like the guild regard him as the caretaker of his party, of sorts, so they've been making him clean up after their messes.

And so, Kazuma wanted me to investigate exactly what his comrades get up to when he's not around.

It's a request from a close friend whom I owe a lot to, and what's more, he even promised me an adequate reward, so I had no reason to refuse.

In that case... Let's investigate that explosion maniac today.

She's a Crimson Demon like Yunyun. According to Sir Vanir, the Crimson Demons are a belligerent clan whose members are born with high mana.

Just from their naming sense alone, you can tell that they are a clan with a unique sense of aesthetics. And, in that sense, Megumin is considered to be a prodigy.

And that reason is because, apart from Explosion, she has no intention of learning any other spell.

It seems like she usually drags Kazuma with her outside the city to cast Explosion every day, but after he refused to accompany her on account of the recent cold weather, she has started making the trip with other people.

...It's only after you get used to hearing an explosion every day that you can call yourself a proper resident of Axel.

"Did I make you wait?"

“I think it’s about time that you stop doing such things.”

Today’s companion is Yunyun.

“That’ll never happen. Don’t you know that I will die if I don’t cast an explosion every day?”

“I’ve never heard of such a thing!... Still, whenever I carry you back recently, the residents of the town would welcome me with a kind gaze. Someone even told me ‘thank you for your hard work’ the other day. It made me feel a little happy...”

Yunyun might be reluctant, but, despite her frown, it seems like she’s really happy to be relied upon by others.

“Instead of complaining, let’s hurry up and go.”

“Wha- Why are you ordering me? I’m the one who’s accompanying you! Hey, did you hear me? W-Wait up!”

Despite her protests, Yunyun still ended up following Megumin outside the town.

Rather than accompanying her, it’s more like she couldn’t refuse any requests.

It always feels like if one were to kneel and beg her, she’d agree to anything no matter what it is.

Following behind the two, we ended up arriving at a piece of barren land.

...To be more accurate, this place only became barren because of that explosion girl.

I think that this place used to be a small forest. Now, not only was the soil exposed, but it even hosted more than a few craters.

“This place has become full of holes! You’ll need to properly fill them up later, otherwise it’ll cause people a lot of trouble.”

“I’ll let you handle that. I’m a very busy person.”

Just as Yunyun busied herself with filling the craters with magic, Megumin nonchalantly released her Explosion and carved another crater into the landscape.

Yunyun lifted the collapsed Megumin onto her back in a practiced manner and started complaining as she made their way back.

When they reached town, Megumin seemed to have regained enough energy to walk by herself, and climbed down from Yunyun's back.

"I've fulfilled your request, so, as discussed, let us settle our duel right here!"

"Even after losing so many times... You really don't learn, do you? So, what should we compete in today?"

"Ah, that... We should settle this with magic... but Megumin only knows Explosion, and she already used it for today, so that won't do."

"I already used my magic for today. I don't mean to brag, but I won't be of any help for the rest of the day."

"That's not something you should be proudly boasting about!"

"Aah! What did you say? Say it again!"

"D-Don't get angry."

"You've always been unable to read the mood, Yunyun, but doesn't it seem like it has gotten worse lately? It must be because of the bad influence of that friend you recently made."

Yunyun clutched Megumin's clothes and tearfully denied it. Just who was that friend that they were referring to?

Megumin is a childhood friend of Yunyun, so I can rule her out. Apart from her, the only people who have interacted with Yunyun recently would be Sir Vanir and that beautiful store owner.

Did she end up making a new friend without me knowing? Seeing how desperately she's denying it, it must be a pretty nasty fellow.

The two of them eventually decided on an eating contest, and Megumin ended up winning an overwhelming victory.

It's hard to believe that she can eat that much with that petite figure of hers. Still, it doesn't seem like she has grown any.

Afterwards, she chatted about something with the Axis Cult Priest and Chris, but it doesn't seem like she troubled anyone today.

She even released her Explosion in a place where it wouldn't cause any trouble for the town. The only thing she troubled was a piece of barren ground.

Yunyun said that doing so will cause troubles for others, but it doesn't seem like she means it, so that doesn't count.

After a long day, Megumin finally went home.

Yunyun seemed really lonely as she watched Megumin enter the mansion.

Bah, screw it, I suppose I can treat her to dinner.

# Short story

## Observing Darkness

When I was in the adventurer's guild, checking if there are any easy yet profitable quests like I usually do, I received a strange, "off the record" request from Kazuma. It seems like the guild regard him as the caretaker of his party, of sorts, so they've been making him clean up after their messes.

And so, Kazuma wanted me to investigate exactly what his comrades get up to when he's not around.

It's a request from a close friend whom I owe a lot to, and what's more, he even promised me an adequate reward, so I had no reason to refuse.

In that case... Let's investigate the Crusader Darkness.

I did follow her in the past, but I was with someone else back then. Following her alone will make it easier for me to act.

When I was observing Kazuma's mansion in the morning, I saw Darkness angrily throw open the door and stomp out.

"This is a waste of my time! I don't want to spend any more of it on a lazy bum like Kazuma... Wait, this is..."

"Don't bother. You shouldn't concern yourself with that thing, Darkness."

"Don't worry, Megumin. I'll definitely drag him out to hunt monsters tomorrow, so just wait."

With that, Megumin and Darkness angrily left the house.

Looks like Kazuma refused to accompany them on a quest.

Now that he has a large mansion and a huge pile of money, who would want to continue working such a dangerous job as an adventurer? I understand Kazuma's feelings extremely well.

Darkness bid farewell to Megumin on the way, and headed towards the adventurer's guild...

I followed behind her and entered the guild.

"Giant Frog subjugation huh... Getting swallowed whole and covered in slime from head to toe... Isn't this just the perfect opponent? Why do Aqua and Megumin hate them so much? This is so unfair. I'm the only one who has yet to experience it..."

Darkness mumbled something to herself as she stared at the Giant Frog Subjugation quest.

After standing there for a while, it seems like she eventually acknowledged that she can't handle them by herself, and moved over to the counter to chat with Luna.

"Excuse me, I'm alone for today. Are there any adventurers who'd be able to team up with me?"

"Ah, teaming up with Darkness-san... Err, well, everyone seems to be pretty busy..."

Luna averted her gaze.

She looked around at the seemingly free adventurers lazing around the guild, and every one of them hurriedly turned around.

"Ah, I have a job lined up after this! Oh, no, it's already this late."

"Come to think of it, today's my little brother's birthday. I should hurry home."

"Oh dear, I seem to have drunk a few too many glasses. If only I weren't so drunk."

Voices like that echoed throughout the guild.

I understand how these people feel. Once you've partied up with Darkness once, you won't ever want to go through that ever again.

Incapable of hitting any of her attacks, charging directly towards an enemy on sight, and, above all, a genuine pervert who'd charge into the path of even her allies' spells.

Only when Kazuma is in the party can those tendencies be somewhat controlled.

"Everyone seems pretty busy. Forget it then."

Hearing Darkness's words, everyone present let out a sigh of relief.

She might be top class as far as vanguards go, but if that vanguard were to charge directly into the midst of enemies without saying a word, it'd be better not to party with her.

Afterwards, Darkness still wanted to accept the Giant Frog subjugation quest by herself, but Luna eventually talked her out of it. After reluctantly letting go of the matter, Darkness left the guild.

"She's standing there by herself. Just what is she doing?"

After coming to the village square, Darkness, for some unknown reason, simply stood there and gazed at the fountain.

That kind of reminds me of someone.

Ah, don't tell me, does this girl have no friends too?

Yunyun who had become like my old friend lately pretty much spends all of her time on her own. Whenever she has nothing to do, she would dumbly gaze upon the passersby. Just like that.

Apart from Kazuma's party and Chris, Darkness doesn't seem to interact much with anyone else.

Kazuma's a pretty swell guy, so everyone gets along well with him.

That self-proclaimed goddess is pretty popular too thanks to her party skills.

Though no one is willing to party up with that explosion brat, she somehow seems to have quite a few people hanging around with her. She even followed me with a bunch of strange girls a while back.

And Darkness... Well, she has her own duties apart from being an adventurer, so she should be pretty busy. I suppose it's fine.

At the very least, she isn't as bad as Yunyun.

Afterwards, Darkness started wandering around the city. For some strange reason, she seems to be purposely walking down some shady backstreets.

Her eyes seem to be sparkling as she walked down the deserted streets, and she's excitedly panting with a flushed face... Nah, it's probably just my imagination.

After pacing several times around the street in front of the strange shop, she headed back home with a dejected expression.

Even though she didn't run into any incidents, today was still a tiring day.

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*And this is the last of the Dust short stories.*



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